

EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT  
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## The geese are getting fat

As Christmas approaches, the signs of the season of goodwill abound – not all of them in the High Street. Lobby correspondents begin to write identical stories about the huge sums of money which the Chancellor of the Exchequer expects to distribute in tax cuts in his next budget. Note the Nusspeak conventions which can turn a reduction in taxation into a gift from the Government, rather than a bribe, by deliberately keeping his hands from picking and stealing, were seen as handing out presents. All who (like those who keep the education service on the road) depend for their livelihood on public expenditure, will note the assumption that all activities financed from public funds are by definition bad, while tax cuts are by definition good; that services provided by the private sector are admirable, while those in the public sector are inherently undesirable; and that public investment, though urgently needed, must always take second place to private consumption.

Not all the pre-Christmas revelations, however, have concerned tax-cuts and public spending, and Mr Lawson's attempt to counter the indifferent press he has enjoyed of late. Lord Young, the former chairman of the Manpower Services Commission who now sits as a Minister without Portfolio, has been flying kites about future plans for the 16-18 age group. He has hinted at an extension of the public provision of training, education and work experience, so that a real alternative to unemployment should be available to all under-18s. This gets described as a two-year YTS – a guarantee of work, or education or organized training and work experience for everyone – that is to say, the effective removal of young people under 18 from the unemployment register.

A speech by Mr Geoffrey Holland last week (see page 5) discussed these issues from the standpoint of the MSC, and probably gives an indication of the thinking behind Lord Young's hints. Many people would welcome beefing up the YTS in the way which Mr Holland suggests; they would welcome it even more if it were combined with a full-blooded attempt to expand educational opportunity, and access to full and part-time education beyond 16.

What Mr Holland is recommending is going to require considerable additional resources: how much depends on what, in the event, would be the balance between education, ordinary employment and the YTS, among 16 to 18-year-olds as a whole. Logically, there need be no increase in the sum of national resources devoted to the age group *in toto*, though the distribution of costs between the Government, the employers, the colleges, the education and training agencies, and the young people and their families, might be varied. The costs which most concern Lord Young, are those which will fall on public funds – not only those payments made by the MSC and the education authorities but also the supplementary benefit available to young people who cannot get jobs but refuse to join the YTS.



There is no doubt that some of the cost of a two-year YTS (by whatever name) would be expected to come from the employers, who already employ many in this age group at wages well above that of the YTS. It must be an assumption of an expanded scheme that it will embrace some of those who are now in ordinary employment, thus making the YTS into a general scheme of induction and training, not just a scheme for unemployed young people. The employers would have to pay a bigger share of the cost in the second year of a two-year YTS than they now pay for the one-year scheme, but part of the package would be a further lowering of youth wages and more cheap labour.

Lord Young has again floated the idea that those in the 16 to 18 age range might be deprived of their right to supplementary benefit if, and when, a comprehensive range of opportunities is available to them in a revamped Youth Training Scheme. It is agreed that standards of training still leave a lot to be desired in many YTS schemes, and (it is said) raising these standards is the first priority. But, provided this can be done, what justification can there be for continuing to pay out £17 a week to 16-year-olds who choose to do nothing rather than take what the scheme can offer?

Mrs Thatcher has now declared herself to be among those who think that 16 to 18-year-olds should lose their benefit entitlement. The idea has been around in the Department of Employment for many years. Suggestions for applying sanctions to young people who declined places in the old Youth Opportunities Programme surfaced when Albert

Booth was James Callaghan's Secretary of State. Cuts in benefit entitlement were again bruited abroad under James Prior and Norman Tebbit. On each occasion they were resisted by a formidable coalition of forces.

The Manpower Services Commission staff were against sanctions; so too, on the Commission, were the employers' representatives and those of the trade unions. The youth lobby, typified by Youthaid (but including many less strident voices than that particular pressure group) was solidly opposed. The reasons varied. Alongside the principled opposition of the youth lobby, which was against any move to reinforce the dependency of young people, there was the pragmatic opposition of employers who simply believed that taking away the right to benefit would bring trouble-making victims of the press-gang into a scheme which depends on the cooperation of the trainees in their own training. Others have seen the move as one which would undermine the YTS, by making it less sensitive to user needs. By removing the only alternative source of income support, it would take away the only competitive spur to the YTS.

Against this, there are what amount to basic, moral arguments that it is wrong to subsidize idleness in those who reject useful work and training: that the State is doing nobody a favour by paying school-leavers to spend their first post-school days hanging around street corners. And beyond this, there are suggestions of skiving and hustling – a black economy in which supplementary benefit is subsumed in other tax-free emoluments of brazen illegality.

The moral arguments are politically powerful and not to be set aside by misleading talk about "conscription" and "compulsory YTS". There are, however, very good reasons for continuing to take the pragmatic opposition seriously. Before there could be any question of withdrawing benefits, a lot would have to be done to improve the quality of the YTS and the range of opportunities (including those in Mode B, which have been out of favour with the MSC). This is easier said than done. These improvements are badly needed anyway and no doubt Lord Young will say so. Till they have been achieved it would be unwise to apply sanctions.

Nor would it be wise to ignore the arguments put by the employers in the past. They do not want to take on hostile and recalcitrant young people. But if they are, in effect, forced to, they must reserve the right to fire them if they don't toe the line. Is the Government prepared for them then to be destitute?

Finally, there must be real doubts as to the economics of the withdrawal of benefits – it would appear to make the YTS even more expensive. Instead of some young people getting £17 a week on supplementary benefit, all would have to be paid at least £26.50 on the YTS. This may seem like a particularly generous kind of oppressive treatment, but it would certainly add heavily to the cost. If that kind of money is about, why not realistic EMAS?

## Second opinion Wanted: a commitment to libraries

In *The TES* of December 7, Virginia Makins described the content of the report, *School Libraries*, just published by HMSO. I want, rather, to consider its significance: what's new; what's true; what is the status of the report and its likely success?

A major change is in the concept of the school library. Whatever the dismal reality – and Virginia Makins reminded us of the perturbing findings of the DES 1981 survey of secondary school libraries – official reports for the past 20 years have offered plenty of comfortable theories about the role of the school library, nearly all expressed in architectural terms. So school libraries have been variously boilerhouses, engine rooms and buttresses to the curriculum. Behind these energies has been the view of the library as support to the main business of the school.

This latest report is bolder. School libraries are the foundations of the curriculum. It is through them that pupils learn the information-handling and study skills required throughout the curriculum. It is this claim, and the strength with which it is made, that marks out this report. If I agree with it, we are inevitably led to alterations in curriculum planning, in students' work programmes and in the staffing of school libraries.

It is new to find a mixed group of teachers and librarians able to unite in recommending extension of the employment of chartered librarians in schools – a subject that has caused bitter demarcation disputes in the past. It's new to find informed discussion of the support role of school library services, and particularly timely to have such a defence when some are threatened with extinction. There are undoubted resource implications in the proposals put forward here, but after years of nagging reports on book shortages it is refreshing to find one which concentrates on purpose and objectives, believing that appropriate resources will follow.

The extensive press coverage so far achieved masks the fact that this report was compiled (with some signs of haste) by a working party of five to a council – the Library and Information Services Council – whose existence is probably unknown to most teachers, and whose power is decidedly questionable: a council, moreover reporting to the Office of Arts and Libraries, which has thought fit to provide disclaimer upon disclaimer as preface. Publication "does not commit the Government to support the views contained, and 'additional expenditure cannot be taken for granted'". If school libraries are the foundations of the curriculum, isn't it strange that the commission did not come from the DES, particularly when its 1981 survey so clearly demanded further investigation? And doesn't the whole business underline further the nonsense of separating arts and libraries from science and education?

So what will become of this report? "It will be cold by next week", said a journalist. Even the most optimistic must doubt whether the eight major recommendations to the DES will be heeded. It is doubtful whether the DES and Office of Arts and Libraries will even agree "where responsibility lies for the inspection of school library services". I do have hopes that the British Library will make funds available for the two modest research project proposals. Beyond that, it is up to us. There's a task for most *TES* readers, whether education policy-makers or administrators, teachers or librarians, among the 22 recommendations. May I even challenge *The TES* to give space in 12 months time to monitor progress? The report may grow cold, but the subject will not.

And of course, as the Commission notes, often the delay and expense is compounded by the Secretary of State who turns down reorganization proposals when they get to him. On this point, the Audit Commission deserves to be sharply reminded that it is not for it to say how many schemes Sir Keith, should accept or reject. The law requires him to consider schemes (and objections) on their merits and this must mean just that. In practice, it is no easier for Sir Keith to exclude political and populist pressures than it is for the local authorities. And quite right, too. Heaven preserve us from the technocrats.

no comment

Students may be forgiven a part or all of their tuition fee in the following cases: if a student finds it difficult to pay higher tuition fees for special reason such as the death of his parents or himself.

Peggy Heels

Mrs Heels is assistant county librarian for Berkshire.

## Unpopular contract proposals unite staff as unhappy term ends

## Scottish teachers set for long 'guerrilla' battle over pay review

by David Ross

Scottish schools close their doors today on one of the unhappiest terms for a long time, and will reopen in two weeks to the most sustained period of industrial action Scottish education has experienced.

The Educational Institute of Scotland, to which 80 per cent of Scottish teachers belong, was this week asked to return on a ballot which is expected to authorize the union's leadership to escalate industrial action in pursuit of the independent pay review that Scottish teachers have been demanding since the summer.

This will be the last act in a school term which has seen teacher unions, usually backed by their employing education authorities, approaching the Secretary of State for Scotland, Mr George Younger, for an independent pay review; and in which the new standard grade development programme (the Scotland's equivalent of Sir Keith Joseph's replacement for O levels) has been sabotaged by a boycott of curricular development work by the EIS since August, and by the other teacher unions since last week; and a strike in the last two weeks, closing almost every Scottish secondary.

The Government has upset the teachers by rejecting their case and offering a deal along the lines of the structure package recently rejected in England and Wales by the National Union of Teachers. The EIS plans a campaign of "guerrilla warfare" for next term, with industrial action in politically sensitive areas such as



George Younger... offered deal

ministers' constituencies. It is not yet known whether this will involve closing schools.

Conditions of service has always been an emotive subject in Scotland because of a decade-old contract of employment limiting class sizes (norm 33) and class contact hours by law. Scottish teachers and their unions have always guarded this formula jealously. A week before Mr Younger's proposal effectively to buy the contract out a committee which includes all the employing authorities had unanimously endorsed a report which said teachers deserved an improvement in conditions, and not a trade-off.

Mr John Pollock, general secretary of the EIS, said Mr Younger had invited Scottish teachers by turning the debate from pay to "the contract" which Scottish teachers, all too conscious of class sizes south of the Tweed, would never give up.

## 'Wrong reasons' for contracts

Half of the 20,000-plus fixed-term contracts for teachers in England and Wales are issued for unacceptable reasons, the National Union of Teachers said this week.

The union, which has consistently campaigned against fixed-term contracts to help local authorities axe teachers' jobs, says the number issued

over the last three years has risen by about 15 per cent.

According to its own survey, about 4.6 per cent of the teaching force are now on fixed-term contracts as opposed to 4 per cent in 1981 – or just over 20,000 compared with just over 17,500.

## Sir Keith unveils merit plans

by David Lister

Sir Keith Joseph, the Secretary of State for Education, said this week expanded on his plans for merit and distinction certificates in the new 16-plus examination with a consultation paper on how the new certificates would work.

It says: "The chief purpose of introducing such certificates is to encourage able pupils to maintain breadth and balance in their curriculum in their fourth and fifth secondary school years." The certificates would be both "incentive and reward" for attaining good grades in a broad range of subjects. Their introduction would keep pupils' options open for A-level and other courses and provide a foundation for a wider sixth-form curriculum.

Sir Keith and Mr Nicholas Edwards, the Secretary of State for Wales, see distinction certificates as a "prize or honour" for which high standards would be needed.

Merit certificates would also be aimed at able candidates, but their standards would be less demanding. The paper stresses that, while encouraging more able pupils to take a broader curriculum, it would be important not to pressurize them to take

examinations in too many subjects. It says this would be detrimental to standards achieved.

Sir Keith proposes that a distinction certificate should be awarded to candidates with good GCSE grades in at least seven subjects: Mathematics, English, a science and a foreign language would be compulsory. There would be a number of subject groups from which a candidate could choose the remaining three subjects.

To be awarded a distinction certificate, candidates would have to obtain at least two A grades and one C in "higher grades" (i.e. grades A to C) in at least seven specified subjects with at least one grade C over the seven subjects.

It is claimed merit certificates might give incentives to a wider circle of pupils to follow a broad, balanced curriculum.

The paper considers two alternatives. One would reduce the demands of the distinction certificates by requiring seven grades in six, rather than giving subject areas. Grade requirements might be six C grades or above.

The other alternative would be simpler to understand and operate, says the paper. It would require candidates to achieve higher grades in at least six subjects.

## NEWS

## Cane ban mother in High Court appeal

A mother will next month appeal to a High Court judge to quash her conviction for failing to send her two sons to school.

The brothers did not attend their school in Mid Glamorgan because the headmaster would not exempt them from corporal punishment.

Their mother will be represented during the two-day hearing by Mr Stephen Sedley QC, who has repre-

sented other parents opposed to corporal punishment and has campaigned for its abolition.

He will argue that defying a parent's objection to the practice is a violation of human rights, as defined in the European Convention on Human Rights.

Currently the boys attend a different school, 12 miles from home, which recently banned corporal punishment, and Labour-controlled Mid-Glamor-

gan Council pays for their taxi fares there and back, estimated at £60 a week.

● *The TES* of November 16, referred to a boy's hand being badly injured during a caning at a Mid-Glamorgan school. It should be made clear that the source of this claim was the boy's mother, her solicitor, and the anti-caning organization, STOPP. The headmaster of the school strenuously denies the claim.

## NAB under fire on training cuts

by John O'Leary

The National Advisory Body received a blunt rebuke from Sir Keith Joseph this week for not pressing ahead with further cuts in teacher training and other areas.

It came in a letter from the Education Secretary, endorsing the allocation of next year's advanced further education pool.

In the letter written to his under-secretary Mr Peter Brooke, in his capacity as chairman of the NAB committee, Sir Keith accepted the body's advice on the detailed allocation of its £620 million budget.

He also welcomed the establishment of a research fund and the continuing emphasis on science, engineering and other vocational courses, as well as sub-degree and part-time provision. But he continued: "I had also, however, hoped that the NAB's work during the year might result in proposals for the rationalization of provision in a number of fields."

Sir Keith accepted that, particularly where colleges engaged in teacher education were concerned, there had been significant problems over a short time scale. But he was disappointed that rationalization had not been possible. He hoped to receive advice next year on teacher training pools for 1986-87.

"I hope, too, that the NAB will also offer advice on the implications more generally of its recommendations on teacher training for the institutions concerned; and that the NAB will make good progress with its reviews of art and design and, in consultation with the University Grants Committee, of architecture," he said.

"I also look forward to the development of improved bases for the planning of a higher education which makes best use of the resources available."

For the first time, a part of the pool is being held back to finance research. Polytechnics and major colleges are being invited to bid for a maximum £150,000 per institution from a fund of £2.5 million. – *THES*

## Dons' union demands doubling of student roll in next 10 years

by Bert Lodge

University student numbers should be doubled over the next 10 years as they were in the 1960s, the winter conference of the Association of University Teachers was told in York this week.

Dr Ron Emmanuel of Glasgow University said in his Presidential address: "Only in the perverse fantasies of the Secretary of State can there be any belief in learning and higher universities." The real demand for more places in universities and the public sector was enormous.

The quality of education the universities provided was being lowered together with the reduction in places.

Dr Emmanuel, a lecturer in chemistry, said: "The 5,000 academic staff we have lost since 1981 were doing essential teaching and research. There was no way that work could have been loaded on to those remaining without a fall in quality."

The good sense of a massive increase in university places followed on from several developments in contemporary society. The pace of technological change required more education for work and leisure, society now required a more highly educated workforce. In the past, many had been denied the opportunity of higher education.

The cost of providing a university place and an adequate maintenance grant for a student on a three-year course was perhaps £30,000 – less with current maintenance grants.

He asked: "Who can believe that, during the remainder of a graduate's life, that amount will not be repaid many times over directly and indirectly? Education is a bargain investment – it would be cheap at twice the price."

But while people must not be cheated out of a university place from which they could benefit, neither must they be led into an education system where there were too few staff, who were too demoralized, too under-equipped and with too little time for research to provide students with the education they deserved.

Dr Emmanuel said provision of places and high-quality education were part of a single principle. It was important the AUT did not allow these two separate aspects to be set against each other.

"We must not be tricked into determining priorities within it, into debating whether adequate salaries are more important than expanded access, or whether providing stability of employment for temporary staff is more important than increasing the equipment grant."

He said the Government's attitude to education was part of its wider

attitude to the public services. "This Government views the public services not as the fundamental achievement of a civilized and humane society but as a parasite on the back of society to be reduced to the barest skeleton."

He contrasted this with the attitude of the Tory government in the early 1960s, which resulted in the expansion of the university system. "The number of university students doubled. Over the next 10 years there should be another doubling of numbers."

● An "Academics for Labour" campaign will be launched next year in colleges and universities throughout the country. Mr Giles Radice, the opposition spokesman on education, told the conference.

He said: "It will be a campaigning group to promote democratic socialist values and ideas in our universities, polytechnics and other higher education institutions." The Labour Party would also be producing an alternative Green Paper to that Sir Keith Joseph, Education Secretary, was planning in the New Year.

Mr Radice called for a reform of the University Grants Committee: "It is understaffed, operates too much in secret, and is not sufficiently representative. The old UGC may have been appropriate in the 1960s and 70s but is not up to the kind of role it is now playing and will play in the future."

He saw a role for a higher education council to provide a forum for discussion. "The more we blur the binary line, the better it will be for the country."

For from accepting the Government's strategy of contraction for higher education, Labour believed the late 1980s and 1990s should be a period of innovation and change.

The institutions would need the security of funding for which the UGC and the National Advisory Body were asking. For its part, the higher education sector must be ready to adapt to changing needs.

Mr Radice said: "We accept that money should be provided for 'new blood' schemes but we want to see universities put into practice the 'ability to benefit' principle on access. We want them to take seriously their responsibilities on continuing education and on opportunities for mature students."

"We want them to move closer to their communities. They are not just national and international institutions. They are local ones as well and should remember it."

## Back-pay held up for many

by Richard Garner

Hundreds of teachers face Christmas still waiting for the back-pay due to them from the belated settlement of this year's pay claim.

Those most likely to be without the money – which could range from just over £100 to about £450 before tax – are teachers who left a job with an authority to go to another at the end of the summer term.

For instance, the Inner London Education Authority, the largest in the country, has just announced that it expects former employees to write in and claim their back pay this year – a

move which brings it into line with many other authorities.

A spokesman said this was partly because in the past, when officials have sent the money to the address they have for former employees, cheques have been returned to them.

She added that about 2,000 teachers left the ILEA's employment at the end of the summer. Those who needed to claim were teachers who had gone to jobs elsewhere or retired. Those who took voluntary redundancy pay would receive the back-pay automatically.







## NEWS

Richard Garner looks at the debate on proposals for assessment of staff performance, and describes the system used in Services schools abroad. On page 7 the Hungarian approach.

## NAHT calls for review every two years

Negotiations on next year's teachers' pay claim will start early in the New Year with little prospect of an agreement, either on salaries or on the new structure for the profession proposed by local authority leaders.

The National Union of Teachers - which has an overall majority on the teachers' side of the negotiations - is almost certain not to bow to pressure from the management and leaders of other teacher unions to change its mind over its decision to call a halt to the structure talks, which were tackling the assessment question.

It has now emerged that the decision to pull out was taken by the NUT's 43-strong executive without anyone voting against it, and leaders of the union say they have heard nothing in subsequent discussions with local authority leaders to make them change their mind.

Their biggest fears are over the assessment side of the package - which would require teachers to face annual assessment and give headteachers the right to withhold annual increments from individuals - and the inclusion of

a clause in teachers' contracts committing them to a limited form of lunchtime supervision and cover for absent colleagues. Also, they believe the pay proposals are inadequate.

Despite this impasse, the other teachers' organizations have been compiling their own responses to the management package, albeit with no chance of formal negotiations on them. The National Association of Head Teachers is the latest to follow this road, with a paper which calls for teachers who fail their assessment after three years on the new entry grade proposed by the management to be barred from continued employment in the profession.

The NAHT calls for a toughening up of the management proposals, saying: "We reject the proposition that termination of employment as an entry grade teacher shall not deprive a teacher from obtaining further employment as a teacher."

"We firmly believe that if a teacher's appeal against an adverse recommendation at the end of the entry period fails, or if there is no positive



recommendation after an extended period of one year, he/she will have demonstrated that the vocational instinct for teaching is absent, and should not, therefore be allowed to practice as a teacher."

It says that the proposed levels of salaries for headteachers are "woefully inadequate" and that steps must be taken - such as the establishment of a salary review body or the use of an indexing formula along the lines agreed for the police - to see that teachers' pay does not fall behind again.

In addition, it wants conditions of service to be negotiated every two years in a collective agreement which could be renegotiated to tie in with salary discussions.

However, it criticizes the management's document for failing to make any provision for non-contact time for teachers outside the classroom.

It also says that the proposals for lunchtime supervision - which would require teachers to cover - are unacceptable, suggesting instead a separate contract with additional payments made to all those who carry out supervision duties.

The National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers has already tabled its response, which calls for a substantial boost to the cash

side of the package - the maximum on the newly-created main professional grade should be £16,500, it proposes, not the £11,800 put forward by the management - and agrees to a form of assessment and a contractual commitment to cover for absent colleagues once a week.

The Secondary Heads Association, the Assistant Masters and Mistresses Association and the Professional Association of Teachers have all said they will prepare responses, too.

However, there will still be an impasse if the NUT remains resolved not to take part in further talks - and it is then that Sir Keith Joseph, the Education Secretary, has threatened to play his trump card and legislate to compel local authorities to introduce assessment.

The reaction of all of the teachers' unions to this idea has been initial hostility. The NAHT said this week that an attempt to introduce assessment through legislation would create "a considerable backlash".

This could include non-co-operation from the other teacher unions, it adds.

## Where discipline is firm - among staff and pupils

It could almost be the education authority that Sir Keith Joseph, the Education Secretary, dreams of.

Teachers face a form of assessment every three years - and have asked for (and will get) a more formal annual procedure soon. Both they and their heads are on fixed-term contracts, and staff agree to cover for absent colleagues and carry out lunchtime supervision.

In addition, they can be told to take pay cuts - and there is never any whiff of industrial action.

On the educational front, truancy is no problem and other discipline problems are minimal. All the fathers of the pupils are employed and almost all the youngsters come from two-parent families. The employment rate among school-leavers is also much higher than in the United Kingdom.

For good measure, there are no awkward elected councillors or school governors to deal with. In addition, the schools have their own measure of privatization - with some fee-paying pupils from foreign countries working alongside the sons and daughters of British citizens.

Sadly for Sir Keith, it is the only education authority offering state education along the lines dreamed in England and Wales that he does not have jurisdiction over. It is the Service Children's Education Authority and comes under Mr Michael Heseltine, the Defence Secretary.

SCEA as it is called, was established in 1969 to meet the needs of Service

children, and runs 115 schools worldwide - the majority of which (93) are in West Germany. Other countries where it has schools include Cyprus, Hong Kong, Nepal, Denmark and the Netherlands.

It has a budget of £55 million and, like its UK counterparts, suffers from falling rolls. It has 29,000 pupils in its schools, compared with just over 31,200 last year.

As far as teachers are concerned, it has recruited 1,432 from the United Kingdom - the numbers having dropped by just over 500 in the last six years. In addition, about a quarter of that number are engaged locally - wives of Service personnel in the main - and some are recruited from the ranks of teachers qualified for German schools.

Most of its schools are in the primary sector and, indeed, the biggest age-group for children of Armed Services families is the three to five-year-old bracket. There is no statutory nursery service, but the Services provide premises and training to run voluntary playgroups.

SCEA has to compete with independent boarding schools in Britain, - which often advertise in the Armed Services press to woo children away from Services schools.

One advertisement placed by the Independent Schools Information Service recently said that some Services children spend up to 1½ hours getting to school by bus every day - and drew a sharp protest from SCEA over its



Service children at Lister Primary school in Herford, West Germany.

wording.

At present, 21,469 children of Services families are in UK boarding schools - 12,846 - the children of officers.

All receive the same allowance to help meet the costs - £2,580 a year for the first two children and £3,063 for the third going up to £3,192 for four or more.

It is estimated that this amounts to about 70 per cent of the cost of the average independent school and SCEA is worried that some of the less educationally sound private schools base their fees on this figure.

Teachers who take jobs in Service children's schools are all appointed on three-year contracts, and scale one teachers can do a maximum of nine years' service in SCEA schools.

Those wanting to renew their contracts must fill in a form which has space on it for the headteachers' comments on the applicant's professional ability, and attitude to curriculum development and in-service training. In addition, heads are sounded out on the teacher's ability as an administrator, contribution to extracurricular and community activities, and suitability to life in the military community.

The heads are asked to hazard a guess as to their staff's future promotion prospects and assess them as "outstanding", "very good", "good", "fair", "weak" or "unsatisfactory".

Heads also face a form of assessment. They are all appointed on three-year contracts and no one in the profession can serve beyond 50.

The official reason is that the Service community is a young community - becoming mothers at 19 and fathers at 23 on average - but a complication over this rule has emerged with the Department of Education and Science threatening to withdraw premature retirement compensation from those who go to 50.

Talks are going on between SCEA and the DES to rectify the situation, but Colonel Philip de la Haye, director

of SCEA, said he could not support increasing the age limit to 60 if the DES remained inflexible.

A new assessment procedure is on the way, too, in West Germany, at the request of representatives of the two main teachers' unions, the National Union of Teachers and National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers.

It already has the backing in principle of headteachers, and discussions are being held on the exact wording of the assessment form.

One reason teachers in Services schools feel differently about assessment to their counterparts in the UK is the sense of uncertainty that prevails over whether they will get a new contract - they like to know where they stand, and regular assessment tells them.

Mr Nolan Clamp, director of service children's schools in West Germany, is worried about the problems of teacher turnover, too, and is considering offering returns (new three-year contracts) to those teachers SCEA wants to stay.

"At the moment they've got to go down on their hands and knees and beg for it," he says.

On the pay front, teachers recruited in the UK are paid the rates fixed by the Burnham committee, which negotiates pay for the job - plus the allowance for working in inner London.

There is also a foreign service allowance but substantial cuts in this are to be made in January, which has already caused several teachers recruited earlier this autumn to think again about whether they will take up their jobs.

Other teachers hired at the old rate say they have bought things like cars on hire purchase on the assumption that their pay would remain at least at the level at which they were recruited. For a single teacher living in service mess accommodation in West Germany, the rate goes down from £830 to £130 from January 1.

The reason given for the cut is that it is now cheaper to live in West Ger-

many than in Britain.

Teachers working abroad in Armed Services schools can also face a pay cut from another quarter - falling rolls. If a school goes down a group size because of a drop in the number of pupils, the teachers and headteacher's salaries are protected only until the end of their present contract. If it is renewed, they will be paid at a lower rate, commensurate with the new grouping.

However, teachers recruited abroad sometimes receive only two-thirds as much as those recruited in Britain. They are also employed by the term.

The Ministry of Defence says that they do not pay tax on their earnings. However, one UK-recruited teacher married to a woman recruited abroad said that he was taxed on her salary.

A handful of teachers in Armed Services schools forms a third category - those foreign nationals recruited abroad. They receive the appropriate salary for the country they come from. In West Germany, that rate is substantially higher than the British.

For the most part, the schools are more than adequately stocked with resources such as books and computers. One has a profitable arrangement with an East End of London road haulier with a company in West Germany which regularly raids the bookshelves of Hampshire's public libraries for unwanted stock, resells the books to the children's parents and splits the proceeds with the headmaster.

Each school has an advisory committee, with parent, teachers and regiment representatives, to press for any thing it may need. In addition, many mothers come into the schools to act as voluntary helpers.

Several schools have closed during the past few years because of falling rolls. The policy is to review the continued existence of a school when its roll falls below 100 pupils - one is under a review at the moment. Some with fewer than 100 pupils stay open because of their remoteness from any alternative.

If Sir Keith Joseph and the teachers' employers want to see a working model of annual assessment, merit money and short-term contracts for heads, the best place for them to visit might be the People's Republic of Hungary.

All these factors have long been

a well-established part of the Hungarian teacher's life, and in an interview in Budapest with Patricia Rowan last week Dr Bela Kopecky, the Minister for Education and Culture, disclosed plans to boost teacher quality with a new exam to be taken after 10 years' service,

with a substantial rise attached for all those who get through. Keenly aware that the current low level of teachers' pay was unlikely to go along with the looked-for improvements in prestige or standards, or attract men back into the job, he recently

anticipated his new measure with a 10 per cent rise all round.

Early next year, he will introduce in Parliament major legislation with proposals for reform that are currently the subject of a vigorous Hungarian Great Debate.

## Social esteem and secret ballots



Bela Kopecky, Hungarian Minister of Education and Culture: "The object of the Kopecky initiative is not to have teachers fall, but to learn"

to (university) or at technical schools, which also provide professional qualifications.

Another 44 per cent attend for three years at vocational schools, which turn out highly prized - and highly paid - skilled workers according to forecasts of manpower demands, but do not provide the chance to take the certificate of maturity essential for transfer to the university stream.

One of Kopecky's most cherished reforms is to ensure that the majority of children, as well as still wider access to higher education. The main route to this will be unification of the vocational and technical schools; with a fifth year possible. But he expects that to be a long, slow process which could take 10 to 15 years, mainly because of cost and lack of qualified teachers as well as buildings.

Though Hungary has nominal full employment (the policy is to keep a "buffer" labour force in administration on very low pay) it is still a poor and backward country and planned reforms sometimes founder, or are at best delayed, because the money isn't there.

So secondary education for all will have to wait for more classrooms (500 have been built in the past five years in

the attempt to keep up with the '70s baby boom) and a better educated teaching force - more than half at present don't have the necessary qualifications and are trying to catch up in evening classes and correspondence courses.

"It is better to wait," says Kopecky, "and ensure the conditions are right before you start."

Dr Kopecky is much preoccupied by the dichotomy between the material prestige conferred via the vocational schools, and moral prestige "which depends on the value system of society". Intellectuals, and that includes teachers, are badly paid by comparison with skilled workers and he believes that the prestige of teachers has sunk in line with a general intellectual decline.

The Minister's double-pronged plan to raise the teaching profession in social esteem, which he regards as topping up quality and especially for the country depends, is to take steps both to improve teachers' quality and to raise their salaries.

He achieved the 10 per cent pay rise on September 1, "in spite of a very difficult economic situation", which suggests that both he and his portfolio carry some weight in the Government. "It is," he says, "something very important."

Equally important is his proposal for permanent education and training for teachers, which he is trying to link to wages, and which he hopes will become known as the Kopecky initiative.

The essential element would be an external examination, to be set by the universities and colleges and covering both educational theory and specialist subject, to be taken by all teachers after 10 years of practice in the classroom.

Those who pass would receive a supplement to their pay of 500 to 600 forints (around £10) a month, those who fail would carry on working but without the bonus. He doesn't expect many to fail. "But something would have been achieved anyway. The object is not to have teachers fall, but to learn."

The principles of the Kopecky initiative have been accepted by the Government and the teacher union, though practical problems are still being worked on and the idea does not yet seem to be public property in the

same way as the rest of his new programme.

Kopecky's comprehensive new education Bill has been under open discussion since he first outlined it in major speeches last April, and a Hungarian Great Debate has been under way since mid-October, providing a genuine public consultation between the Green and White Paper stages of legislation.

In the only bit of bureaucratic censorship of a whole week's visit to Budapest schools, our admirable interpreter vetoed as improper a question about the plan for retesting teachers' skills, since the headteacher it was addressed to wasn't supposed to know about it yet. As it happened, I had already discussed it with an English-speaking member of her staff, who was full of enthusiasm for the idea of topping up quality and especially for the rise. Since she was on 5300 forints (288) a month after 12 years' experience - and the September rise - it was easy to see why.

That sum is close to the average Hungarian worker's pay and, in spite of good, cheap food and subsidized



A cherished reform: a guaranteed four years' secondary education

culture, provides sufficient reason why 80 per cent of teachers are women, bringing a second pay cheque into the home to help bring up the family. It is also the reason why male teachers have taken up the national habit of a second job (easiest if you have languages for interpreting, PE for sports coaching, or will take on adult education classes).

The proposed new education legislation will be of epic proportions, taking in the priority development of technician training, the (long overdue) updating of curriculum and textbooks, better teacher training, more independence for schools and teachers and more options for children, nursery schools for all cultural developments, more languages, better transition from primary school, and provision for gypsy children, those at risk, or handicapped. Most democratic of all, teaching staff are to have the right to a secret ballot when a new head is appointed.

The higher education provisions have provoked violent discussion in the universities, Kopecky reports, particularly under the good old battleships of autonomy, democracy, and academic freedom, "whatever they mean". He characterizes this discussion, which centres around the Minister's right to appoint lecturers, professors and deans of faculties, as ridiculous, since it is usual to accept all but a very small proportion of the universities' own nominations.

Dr Kopecky also admits drily that "democracy has some forms which are new and exaggerated", especially when it comes to students' right to discuss proposals affecting themselves. "I had to discuss the programme on the development of higher education with a so-called parliament of students for two or three days. It was very interesting - not only comments on universities but about the general state of society, the role of women, the economy, politics and so on."

"Some problems are not educational problems. Good. I am not against that, but it was not an adequate or right place to do it. More like the General Assembly of the UN, or the Hungarian Parliament."

All the same, recent events suggest that it might be a useful and refreshing experience for Sir Keith Joseph to discuss his own higher education proposals with an NUS parliament. In fact, Dr Kopecky shares with him the drawback that higher education is his only direct sphere of influence. The schools belong to the local town and village councils who pay the bills and, though the curriculum is largely centrally controlled, he has recently taken on local government on other issues, and failed.

The inspectorate, for example, is now employed by local councils, rather than the Ministry, and he is trying to wrest back some central control over the national institutes.

"Some intellectuals and parents criticize, because they believe that the Minister of Education and Culture should have a more important influence, but the strength of local government is paramount. It is impossible to centralize."

He describes his new programme as an attempt to humanize education, but its main preoccupation is with the familiar task of trying to balance a general education with the practical needs of industry and the state. The fact that industry is largely state-owned does not, however, seem to avoid that same capitalist problem that the factories don't contribute enough to practical education.

"In agriculture the cooperatives and state farms cooperate with higher education. I cannot say the same for industry."

Bela Kopecky is due to present his well-debated Bill early in the New Year. He is realistic enough not to expect an instant rise in quality. "Education is not a technical problem, it is a cultural problem and it takes time to change."

## Assessment without tears ...

In Hungary the headteacher nominally lives and dies, but only after consultation with the teacher union, and dismissal rarely happens except when the law has been broken.

There are, however, rigorous procedures laid down for annual assessment, for deciding the size of individual increments, and for considering the renewal of head teachers' five-year contracts.

Performance inside and outside the classroom is taken into account, the children's exam results and performance in national study competitions, and relationships with staff and parents. The level of teaching is the most important element.

What the education legislation says is that each school should have its own board of four people: the headteacher; the secretary of the teacher union in the school; the secretary of the Communist Party; and the secretary of the appropriate youth or pioneer organization. The new law may also bring in parents and local employers. In practice it is this board which makes salary decisions and teacher appointments.

In some secondary schools, including the technical school I visited, this board is augmented by around seven heads of departments. In this case, it is the department heads who evaluate every teacher in January, when the national

salary rise is due, the work of each member of their staff.

In September when the special 10 per cent rise was awarded, for example, the 550 forint average was whittled down to a compulsory 400 forints, and the remaining 150 forints was at the disposal of the head, and board, to allow differentiation according to the value of the teacher's work. Some teachers got another 600 forints a month, others got less, or the minimum 400 if their work wasn't good enough.

The procedure is for the department head, or some other senior member of staff, to put in an individual written report for discussion with the teacher, approval by the full board, and final decision by the head, though there is a rarely-used right of appeal to the local council. It is possible for other teachers who know their work to join in any disputed assessment in full peer-group evaluation style, and it is usual for the head to announce the size of each rise, and the reasons why, at a full staff meeting.

The department heads base their judgments on their own classroom visits, and on the reports of district inspectors who make a full inspection at least every five years. The views of heads and deputy principals are also taken into account.

The head of foreign languages at the prestigious technical school special-

ling in economics and foreign trade, Mr Istvan Baranyai, stressed that he considered the work during lessons, including the methods and materials used, the pupils' results during final exams, and how well they worked at their basic studies.

He also noted how often the teacher volunteered for all the extra work involved in preparing materials and software, tapes, overhead projectors and running the frequent after-school clubs. Those who shoulder responsibilities get a better evaluation.

He might also suggest an in-service course at the Budapest Institute where it seemed to be needed, and a compulsory proposal, but difficult to refuse when increments are so clearly at stake.

All the teachers I talked to, admittedly not a real cross-section, seemed to feel that this was socialist democracy at work, and that it was important to make differences according to ability and work, and to have a detailed evaluation, provided that it was carried out in an open and democratic way. What would be unjust would be deciding rises without evaluation.

It has to be said, too, that regular assessment seems to be part of the Hungarian way of life in other professions outside teaching, and that there are good reasons not to resent the role of the inspectors or the heads.

Not only are the local inspectors all

former teachers, but they remain part-time teachers for four to ten periods a week, each attached to their own school and earning a measure of respect for keeping in touch with the classroom.

As to the heads, they have an even more gruelling time every time the five-year contract comes up for renewal, as well as undergoing annual meetings of the school trade union committee to evaluate their work, and canvass staff opinion.

The procedure for contract renewal takes around six months, with full inspections to examine the whole work of the school, and personal conversations with all staff, a parent representative, and the school board to ask opinions on the head's work.

The inspectors evaluate how well the head evaluates the work of other teaching staff, their role in school life, management and teacher development, and knowledge of all school textbooks in use. Then a written report goes to the local council for a final decision on contract renewal.

It is hard to find statistics, but some heads undoubtedly fall their MOT or opt to go back to the classroom with preserved rank and money. But most probably also the social democratic sentiments of the primary head who has already failed through two evaluations. "If someone is doing the job well, there is nothing to fear."

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## PHOTO REPORT

LONDON  
YESTERDAY

Rising from the rubble... Sigdon Road school, Hackney 1947



Tucking in... Creek Road secondary, Deptford 1947



Eye on front... Peckham Park primary 1954

Following up its *Good Old Golden Rule Days* (1902-1914) and *Caps and Goggles* (1920-1945) ILEA has now published the third book in its series portraying day-to-day life in London's schools. *Second Helpings* chronicles, in picture form, the period 1945 to 1963 - the years when the London County Council pushed through the Butler reforms, set about post-war rebuilding and brought in comprehensives. All this against a social background of rationing, rock and roll, "you've never had it so good" and the Beatles. *Second Helpings* is available from the ILEA publicity unit, Room 59, County Hall, London SE1. Price £1.95 plus 40p p+p.



Yard cricket... St Peter's RC school, Woolwich 1954



Practical maths... Effra primary school, Brixton 1954



Dinner hour dance... Creek Road secondary, Deptford 1947

## PHOTO REPORT

LONDON  
TODAY

Head to toe... gymnastics display



Girls from Parliament Hill school get computer experience

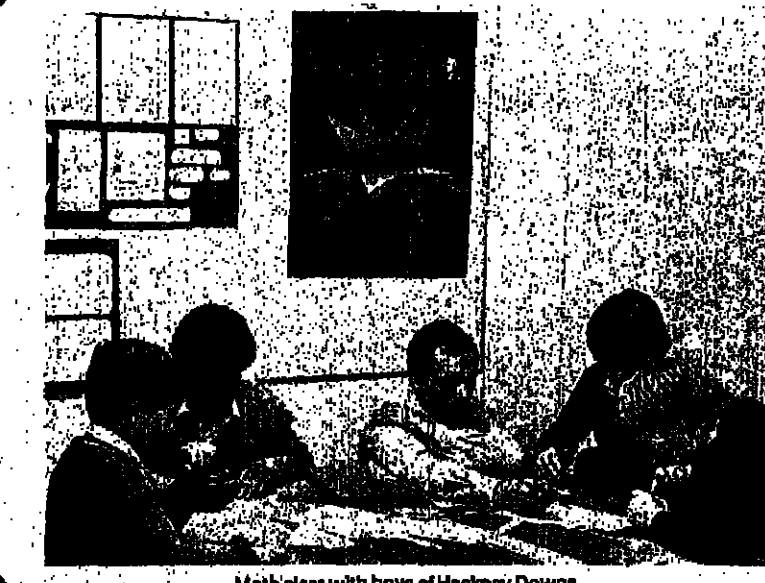
Visitors to ILEA's Schools '84 exhibition this year had the chance to sample the richness and variety of secondary education in London. The exhibition charted the progress of pupils from choosing the school they will go to right through to their work in the sixth-form. Topics covered included transfer from primary school, equal opportunities, use of computers, the curriculum as well as aspects of teaching conditions such as in-service training. They were portrayed in colourful and well-presented displays, photographs and examples of work. But the most popular part of the exhibition, held at the Royal Festival Hall last October, was the mocked-up classrooms in which lessons took place daily ranging from physics and maths to gym and dance.



Sculpture class with boys of Hackney Downs school



Lunchtime recital by Mulberry Girls school



Math class with boys of Hackney Downs

150



## OVERSEAS



A massive literacy programme has been launched for both adults and children in Eritrea - despite the war and famine which have devastated the northern region of Ethiopia. This picture - first published in *The TES* earlier this year - shows a class of youngsters sheltering under a rock to avoid an attack from Ethiopian Mig fighters.

Schools, as well as hospitals, printing presses and hidden wells, have been built in the hillsides. After schooling children often go out and teach other peasants.

The educational aim is to try and make each person self-reliant - either as a farmer, mechanic, agriculturalist, nurse, public health officer, teacher or doctor. Their problem is not a lack of skill, but raw materials such as grain seed, printing pulp, books in English, vehicle spare parts, clothes... and, of course, food.

Schools in Britain can help by either collecting cash or clothes, blankets or books and sending them to the Eritrean Relief Association, 391 City Road, London WC1E 6XX.

## Bacc tries to part the Iron Curtain

The International Baccalaureate Office is hoping that pupils in Eastern Europe may soon be able to sit the examination.

Mr Robert Blackburn, IBO's deputy director general, said: "There is one gap in the international Baccalaureate map at present - and that is in Eastern Europe."

"There is no participation from schools in Eastern Europe. On the other hand, universities there do accept students with an IB diploma. We do hope to make progress, though, particularly in Poland, over the next year or so."

Figures released by the IBO show that a total of 96 universities, colleges, polytechnics and other institutes of higher education in the United Kingdom made 614 conditional offers of

## EUROPE

places to IB students this year - almost exactly the same as last year. However, they have drawn these students from 60 IB schools and colleges - as opposed to 41 last year.

Mr Blackburn said: "We now have some 300 schools in 56 different countries - that represents a growth rate of 25 per cent a year for the last two years. Last year, there was an increase of 46 per cent in candidates taking the diploma."

IB courses offer pupils a well-rounded course in six different subject areas - including their national language, a foreign language, social sciences, art and design and a course devised by the

individual to suit its own needs which has to be cleared with the IBO.

Mr Derek Goulden, its director of examinations, said: "We're expecting another large increase next year - from 6,500 students to 8,000."

Mr Blackburn added: "We have come a long way to doing what we said we would do - and that is to produce an international passport to higher education."

Mr Terry Whitcomb, senior assistant registrar at the University of London's Imperial College, said that IB students taken on at the university often had a "more broadly based educational experience" than former A level students. However, he added that this might alter if the new AS level proposals were implemented in the UK.

## Loss of grant for school broadcasts causes furore

## DENMARK

Christopher Follett on why state aid for educational television and radio programmes is to be withdrawn.

A political furore is raging in Denmark following the announcement of plans by Mr Bertel Haarder, the reformist Liberal Minister of Education, to end total direct state support of educational broadcasting by 1988.

Since 1976 the Danish Ministry of Education has funded the educational section of the state-monopoly Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR), financing its entire television and radio output of both child and adult education programmes. Currently, the state grant for educational broadcasting amounts to 40 million kroner (£3m) a year, divided evenly between adult educational services and school radio/television.

The new proposal, which has majority political backing in Parliament and which threatens 58 DR radio staff members' jobs, cuts the state grant to DR for educational services to 35m kroner next year, 10 million in 1986 and 5 million in 1987. After that direct state support is to cease.

DR is willing to take over the financing of the department's extensive adult education operations at an annual cost of around 20 million kroner, drawn from central funds and a possible increase in television and radio licences, but the future of school broadcasting still hangs in the balance.

The proposal is part of the general policy of Denmark's now two-year-old Conservative-Liberal coalition government to break the monopoly of state radio and television and introduce privatization. State funds withdrawn from DR's budget for school radio and TV would be transferred to a centralized educational agency, which would be given freedom to commission and produce educational programmes from outside DR in the private sector.

DR's educational section broadcasts some 300 hours of television and radio annually at present, half of the output being its own in-house production. In addition to producing educational films for the Ministry of Education, it runs tape workshops where school

children can make their own programmes. It also loans out 300,000 video tapes and cassettes annually as well as publishing more than 100 educational pamphlets and books every year with a total print order of more than five million copies.

Although still absorbing over 8 per cent of the state budget, the Danish educational sector, with its declining rolls and glut of teachers, has experienced severe cutbacks from the austerity and rationalization policies of the rightist government in recent years.



Bertel Haarder

## Cuba's village schoolteachers pack their bags

## NICARAGUA

Nicaragua is replacing Cubans who taught in rural schools for the last five years by its own teachers in the New Year, the Government has announced.

Some 1,600 Nicaraguan teachers recently underwent a four-month intensive training course in Cuba and are now ready to take over primary school teaching next term.

The last contingent of Cuban teachers returned home in November after a two-year stint. During the five years since the Sandinistas came to power 5,000 Cubans have worked in Nicaragua teaching 250,000 children and adults, often in remote villages where the community had never seen a school or a teacher.

They lived with families and helped in literacy programmes similar to Cuba's own in the 1960s as well as teaching the first four grades.

They were also expected to help in agriculture - an integral part of the Cuban education system - to build and repair schools and establish vegetable gardens for pupils to tend.

Conditions were tough and had become increasingly precarious with "contra" guerrilla bands operating from Honduras attacking villages in an attempt to overthrow the Government.

The teachers' work contributed to cutting illiteracy from over 50 per cent to under 13 per cent, and saved Nicaragua approximately 20 million dollars, Fernando Cardenal, Education Minister, has revealed.

Patricia Smith

## Taking the mystery out of microcomputers

## CANADA

Children and adults in Ontario will have more access to microcomputers in community-based computer centres as a result of a project of the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture.

The first 15 centres have just opened in schools, public libraries, YMCA buildings and in the United Chiefs Council building on a native people's reserve. Another 15 are to follow in the near future, each with up to 15 microcomputers, colour monitors and one printer.

The main objective of the centres,

which will cost more than £2 million, is "to speed up the process of familiarizing children of every age, their parents, and anyone else in the community with microcomputers."

Authorized software includes LOGO, word games, music construction and various writing aids but not sophisticated word processing, spreadsheet or database packages.

Children up to 15 years of age must be given access at no charge for at least two hours a day, but fees may be charged at other times and for access by high school students and other adults. One of the first centres was opened in an elementary school,

where students will use it during the day and the public will be invited after regular school hours.

One objective is to encourage group use, including families, to counter the tendency for some young people to become isolated by working on the computer alone for long periods.

Centres may augment resources by funds raised privately and an effort is being made to avoid favouring any one manufacturer.

In order to set up a centre, a full-time co-ordinator must be selected by the sponsoring community organization and attend a three-week train-

ing course given by the ministry. The co-ordinator's main responsibility is to teach in the centre, but extensive use will be made of volunteers. Parents and high school students may be asked to supervise the centre during the co-ordinator's off hours, to provide training.

The agreement between the ministry and sponsoring community organization makes it clear that the organization has full responsibility for all operating costs, and for keeping records, including "evaluative records of use and success of the centres."

Les McLean

## Foreign study seen as a passport to success

## CHINA

China has announced measures to increase the number of students sent abroad for advanced work. Since 1978 14,000 have studied in many foreign countries and are now playing leading roles in teaching, scientific research and production in industrial enterprises.

The policy has proved so successful that increased funds are being allocated and a number of measures planned to provide better working conditions for returning students. Post-graduate centres will be established where those who have acquired doctors' degrees will do research for two years before being assigned to units.

Those who distinguish themselves after their return will qualify for short-term academic tours at government expense. China now has scientific co-operation agreements with 51 countries, as against 16 in 1978.

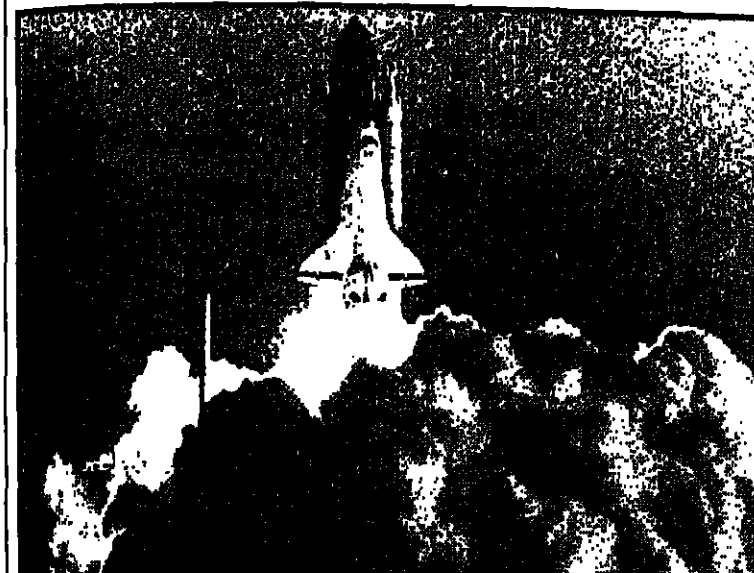
The UK has received only about 1,700 of the 14,000 who have travelled abroad. From conversations with Ministry of Education officials in Beijing it is clear that the main obstacle to getting a bigger share is the recent steep increase in fees for overseas students.

Through the good offices of the British Council, 200 overseas research scholarships are being awarded annually to China, covering tuition fees, but not living expenses.

Peter Mauger

## OVERSEAS

## Who would like to go for a spin?



Let that be a lesson to you... the space shuttle, Discovery, lifting off from the Kennedy Space Centre, Cape Canaveral, in Florida last August. It is an experience in store for whichever US teacher is selected as the first private citizen to make the trip.

## UNITED STATES

The hunt is on in earnest to find the first teacher to go into space, which is scheduled to be early in 1986, courtesy of the United States' space programme.

NASA (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration), which is responsible for the project, has just issued its prospectus for would-be teachers who would like a year off from the classroom to train for, and take, a trip into orbit.

Application forms are now available from NASA's headquarters and the selection process begins next February. NASA says it is looking for either elementary or secondary level teachers who will play "an important role both as a symbol of the teaching profession and as a teacher of the public at large about the experience of space flight."

Each of the 50 states will be entitled to put forward two teachers for the selection process. Additional candidates from other sources mean that 120 names will be sent to a national review body for further education. All 120 will attend a space workshop and "recogni-

tion banquet" in Washington next summer.

The review panel will choose 10 semi-finalists who will be taken to NASA's Johnson Space Centre for thorough medical examinations and briefings before teams of top space experts draw up their list of five finalists.

This daunting process will end when the administrator of the space programme makes the final choice of primary and back-up candidates for the 1986 space flight.

The competition is open to any teacher who has been a full-time classroom teacher for the past five years. If they do not teach in a state school, they must prove that their establishment does not discriminate on grounds of race.

NASA says: "It is expected that the selected teacher and back-up candidate will be released from their teaching responsibilities by their local Board of Education and/or administration during the pre-flight, flight and post-flight period, but will continue as employees of their respective schools and/or school districts."

Richard Garner



"NASA will make arrangements with the local school system to provide suitable financial arrangements including salary, retirement and other benefits for the selected teachers. The selected teacher and the back-up candidate are expected to return to classroom teaching upon conclusion of the commitment made to NASA."

## 'Insulting' new Arkansas law challenged in court

Deborah Kasouf looks at the controversy over tests for teachers.

Ten Arkansas teachers, arguing that the state's new teacher testing law is illegal and insulting, have taken their case to court.

The teachers, with the support of the Arkansas Education Association, filed a lawsuit late last month against the testing law, which requires all teachers in the state to pass both a literacy and a basic skills test.

Arkansas became the first state to mandate the testing of already employed teachers when its governor, William Clinton, introduced the legislation in November 1983 as part of an education reform package.

The law has been a target of protest by the AEA and its parent organization, the National Education Association, since its inception, with both organizations charging that the law is insulting to teachers and a violation of the state constitution's principle of equal protection under the law.

The law requires all of Arkansas's 28,000 certified employees to pass a literacy test and a basic skills test, both of which will be administered in April.

Teachers who fail the test will be fired when their state certification expires.

One of the anomalies of the law, according to the AEA president, Peggy Nabors, is that it mandates the testing of teachers in the 1984-85 school year only. Since teachers in the state are certified for varying lengths of time, some who fail the test could still end up teaching for some time, until the end of their certification, while others with shorter certification periods would be fired.

The law has also caused uncertainty for teachers who are certified in more than one subject. The state education department has stated that only one basic skills test would be required in such cases, while the state Attorney General's office says multiple-certified teachers must be tested in each subject area.

Four of the ten who filed suit have said that regardless of the outcome of their case, they will never take the test, and the teachers' union plans an intensive lobbying campaign for repeal of the law when the state legislature convenes in mid-January.

Earlier this year the NEA, in a report on the status and effects of the Arkansas teacher testing law, claimed it weakened classroom discipline, alienated teachers, drained money from positive educational programmes, and diverted tax money that could be invested in improving, observing and evaluating teachers.

Such an evaluation programme, which would measure such skills as classroom management and communication skills, is preferable to a one-time written skills test, and a majority of teachers in the state support such classroom evaluation, according to the NEA.

"Only classroom observation and evaluation can measure whether a teacher can motivate the unmotivated, inspire the gifted, reach the slow learner, establish and maintain discipline, evaluate student strengths and weaknesses, and develop educational programmes to help each student reach his or her potential", the report said.

## Campus subsidies axe kills Christmas spirit

## NIGERIA

School and university students in Nigeria normally approach Christmas well-ensconced in their various institutions with the academic year in full swing.

This year, however, campuses have remained empty, and even post-graduate students completing their work have been forced to find accommodation in town by the closure of student hostels. The reason is the Government's directive that subsidized food and accommodation must cease and the universities find alternative means of feeding their students.

A bitter struggle has already been fought over the issue of fees, culminating in May in wide-spread student boycotts and the detention of some academic staff and student leaders.

The principle of "free education" was narrowly salvaged on that occasion, only to come under attack from another angle in recent months. To many students, whose families already struggle to pay the 50 naira seasonal fees and the 50 kobo per subsidized cafeteria meals, any in-

crease is tantamount to squeezing them out.

The committee of vice-chancellors' recommendation that undergraduates should pay 150 naira for accommodation has also to be seen in the light of chronic over-crowding by anything up to four times that number.

The universities' response to the Government's directive has been cautious, appointing committees to study the problem and meanwhile closing the hostels and deferring indefinitely the resumption of the academic year. Some, like the University of Ife, have resorted to contracting out student feeding, with an inevitably steep rise in prices.

In schools, conditions are equally bad, with more than 30,000 teachers retrenched this year and the introduction of school fees in states where education was free, resulting in widespread withdrawal of children from school. The so-called "educationally backward" states - Sokoto, Niger, Gongola - have suffered especially.

Jane Bryce

## Recruiting of primary staff stepped up

## NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand's new Labour Minister of Education has reversed the policy of reducing primary school teacher training numbers implemented by his National Party predecessor.

Mr Russell Marshall, however, is sticking by the previous decision to pay trainees no more than other tertiary students. He has announced that an extra 135 pupils will start primary teacher training in February. He said the number of trainees would increase this year.

Despite falling primary school rolls, Mr Marshall promised that there would be further increases in trainee numbers in 1986 and 1987. The total 1985 quota becomes 785 new primary trainees.

The extra teachers will be used to help to implement Labour's election promise to reduce teacher-pupil ratios to 1:20 in children's first years at school. Extra staff are also going to be required for the reading recovery programme, to assist pupils who do not catch on to reading techniques early in their schooling.

Terry Power

## Independent schools accused of invading teachers' privacy

Luis Garcia on allegations that private schools ask excessively personal questions of their employees.

## AUSTRALIA

Teachers seeking employment in many Australian private schools are being questioned about their actual preferences, how much money they have donated to the Church, and whether they have ever had an abortion.

They are also being asked to provide written references from their parish priest or minister of religion to prove that they are committed to a Christian or religion-based education.

These claims have been made by the New South Wales Independent Teachers' Association, which represents about 10,000 private school teachers in the state, most of them employed in Roman Catholic schools. The association says that an increasing number of teachers working in private schools are having their privacy and personal lives invaded frequently by their employers.

It alleges several cases, for example, where intercom systems have been used by school principals to monitor classes without the teachers' knowledge or consent, and at least one where a teacher was dismissed because she had married a divorcee.

Some schools are also asking prospective teachers their view on the authority and accuracy of the Bible, on creation and evolution, as well as views on homosexuality, elections, charismatic gifts, rock music, and the use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

According to the general secretary of the association, Mr Michael Raper, the problem has become so acute and so widespread that it has led to the drawing up of a special policy which is designed to protect the teachers' privacy.

The policy, which is believed to be the first of its type in the Australian education system, was passed by the association's annual conference, held in Sydney last month. It says that teachers do not forego their ordinary civil rights simply because they are employed in a private school, and that any activity, behaviour or investigation by the school which invades the teacher's right to privacy should be strongly opposed.

The policy says that there are certain aspects of a teacher's life which are considered private, and that any pressure on teachers in regard to these aspects should be considered a form of harassment and, therefore, intolerable.

Those are two of the main recommendations outlined in the report, "Action: Education and the Arts", now being considered by the Federal Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Senator Susan Ryan.

The report, which was compiled by a special 11-member task force set up by Senator Ryan last year, has also called on the Government to establish a national advisory committee on the arts in education, comprising national and state representatives, teachers of arts and experienced artists.

They are:

- housing arrangements and household-sharing (whether the teacher lives "in sin", for example);
- marital status, pregnancy, and whether the teacher is a regular church goer;
- personal beliefs and sexual preferences;
- confidential dealings with professional persons, such as priests, counsellors, and medical or legal practitioners;
- the behaviour of family members, including parents, children and siblings.

The policy says that no intercom system should be used in schools without the knowledge and consent of all the persons involved, and that the recording of a teacher's conversation (on the telephone or otherwise) is an objectionable invasion of privacy, as is the opening of a teacher's mail, whether or not it is marked "personal" or "confidential".

It added: "Personal, political or union activity of an employee should not be included on any record and should not become a matter of consideration in any area of school-related activities."

The association is also upset over what it claims is the increasingly prominent role of parish priests and ministers of religion in committees set up to select teachers. "The association views the overlap between spiritual confidant and industrial referee as dangerous, and thus the employment of a teacher should not be dependent upon the good opinion of a parish priest or minister of religion."

Unemployed school-leavers who want to undertake training in the arts should be paid an adequate allowance by the Federal Government, while at the same time being eligible for the dole, a Government report says.

Alternatively, it suggests, these school-leavers should be given part-time jobs in arts-related areas, such as the theatre, which could boost their self-esteem and eventually lead to permanent employment.

These are two of the main recommendations outlined in the report, "Action: Education and the Arts", now being considered by the Federal Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Senator Susan Ryan.

The report, which was compiled by a special 11-member task force set up by Senator Ryan last year, has also called on the Government to establish a national advisory committee on the arts in education, comprising national and state representatives, teachers of arts and experienced artists.

20.12.1984



LETTERS

# Wallowing in blimpish nostalgia

Sir - I was left dismayed after reading Professor Cox's article "1944 and all that" (TES, December 7) but on reflection I realized what a clear, informative shaft of light it cast on the inadequacies of Black Papers.

Anyone regularly involved in discussions with parents about their sons and daughters will be accustomed to anticipating the words: "When I was at school..." usually within the first five minutes of the interview. It is often only when this potential red herring has been politely put aside that real progress about the matter in hand can be made.

This is not a criticism of parents, for whom it is quite natural to use their

own, possibly only, experience of school life on which to base their judgments.

However, I do find it amusing that dangerously naive when an eminent academic, who has seen fit to put himself forward as spokesman for the anti-comprehensive lobby, should fall so glibly into this misinformed approach, especially when the example which he quotes is not only out of date but actually gives the lie to his own argument.

It is ironic that Professor Cox should have chosen to refer to Immingham secondary modern school (where he once taught in the 1940s) apparently without being aware of the educational evolution of that establishment. Quite

simply, it has become the kind of school which, according to the simplistic logic employed by people like him cannot possibly exist.

The second class "sump" he describes, from which it was impossible to escape into any form of higher education, has been replaced for the past 13 years by a thriving 11 to 18 comprehensive school with a sixth-form of 130 plus. It embodies enlightened dedication to meeting the needs of all members of the community it serves, with such success that it constitutes a tangible repudiation of Professor Cox's woebegotten doubts. It vindicates abhorrence of that educational apartheid which the good professor so blithely proposes.

Perhaps where the article really succeeds is in laying bare the attitude of mind behind the Black Papers; the harking back to blimpish nostalgia to a dimly-perceived but supposedly rosy past; the lack of appreciation (in both senses) of the many valuable things happening all around in good comprehensive schools at present; but most seriously, the lack of anything to offer to the majority of future generations except educational second class citizenship.

**RUSSELL BATES**  
Assistant academic deputy  
The Immingham School  
Humbly Grove

## Whirlpool of doom

Sir - It saddened me to realize, when I read "1944 and all that" that Brian Cox is still caught up in the whirlpool of doom, gloom and despondency of which the Black Papers were a symptom. Such is the introspective and self-deceptive nature of such a line of reasoning that Mr Cox seems unaware of the contradictions that were present in his article.

Mr Cox presented an eloquent argument against selection on the grounds of ability. He accepted that any hope of parity between groups of pupils partitioned on the basis of their perceived intelligence was "an absurd fantasy".

It seems to have been Mr Cox's American experience that has confused the issue for him. One is left to wonder how transferable the lessons of downtown Berkeley are to the inner city schools of Britain; I would suggest, not sufficient to argue for a complete reorganization of secondary education

based on the problems of neighbourhood schools in California.

However, Mr Cox does have a valid point - one of the issues facing comprehensive schools nationally is that of underachievement and that the inner city schools specifically have to deal with multiple deprivation. It would seem inappropriate though to suggest that the solution to these complex issues is to withdraw those students who have higher than the average ability. Surely this would compound the problem?

One issue that seems to obsess Mr Cox is that of the effect of class upon educational opportunity. It certainly is one of the factors that preoccupies comprehensive school teachers, particularly those working in inner-city schools. It perhaps reflects Mr Cox's lack of recent experience in schools that has led to his apparently ignoring equally important questions of sexism and multiculturalism in considering the factors leading to underachievement.

The question of sixth-forms in comprehensive schools which cannot maintain adequate group sizes or attract staff with appropriate academic qualifications, is an important one. Many schools and local authorities are, or have, tackled the problem rationally and sensibly.

So, Mr Cox calls for a "new vision of education". He wants a "flexible system of schooling" that does not assume it appropriate to teach all children "in the same way, at the same level and at the same pace". I would argue with Mr Cox though, that all students need an "expectation of success" if they are to find a motivation in their education.

I would suggest, too, that the solution he proposes for "the reintroduction of selective schools at the age of 13 or 14 in the inner cities" is an argument that he has most ably dismantled in the earlier part of his article.

Of course Mr Cox is quick to suggest, for those who fail the selective test, despite their potential, that we keep the doors of educational oppor-

tunity "open as long as possible". His concluding paragraph actually goes on to suggest that our response to youth unemployment should be to raise the school leaving age to 21.

With respect to his views, I would advise that such a prescription is not the "new vision" that he promises but more a recipe for declining standards and a return to all that was bad in the system that he so roundly condemns. There are many in the teaching profession who can actually find some positive benefits in the comprehensive system. If he were to join in the constructive debate aimed at improving the comprehensive system and in acknowledging the excellent practice to be found in many of our non-selective schools, he might discover "the new vision" is alive and well and operating in many of the nations schools.

**PETER MAHER**  
43 Cophthorne Gardens  
Hornchurch  
Essex



## YTS planning

Sir - The article on the key decisions about the size and scope of the Youth Training Scheme (TES, December 7) seems unduly alarmist.

It is quite proper to do an annual appraisal of the population and destination trends. Local experience of close cooperation with officials from MSC demonstrates that these figures are interpreted in the light of recent unemployment figures and current occupancy levels. This produces a tolerably accurate plan for each forthcoming year.

To suggest that planning is on the basis of two year forecasts is unfair to all those involved. We attempt to look ahead over two years; we concentrate our sights on the next year in very sharp focus. "We" includes MSC officials and careers service staff.

The proof of this pudding is in the delivery. In this county we have (in November) 75 per cent occupancy overall. In Mode A in three out of four areas, occupancy is 85 per cent or better, the best being 98 per cent. Planning is part of the key - effective recruitment is the major factor. MSC could be criticized fairly for not putting more money into local efforts, but not for its attempts to plan provision.

**KEVIN DEVINE**  
Education officer (Careers)  
Cambridgeshire

## Remarking scripts

Sir - I read with interest the comments of Mr John Day about the moderation procedures used by the Associated Examining Board (TES, Talkback, December 7). As a representative of one of the Suffolk schools involved in the remarking process he described, I was surprised by his statement that "no complaint had been received from the other centres concerned".

My understanding of the AEB's procedure is that enquiries about results are made through the completion of a re-checking form and that they are to reach the board before October 10 together with the appropriate fee. I understand that re-checking forms had either been sent or were in the process of being completed from the centres involved and that there was a great deal of concern about the results on the part of pupils, parents and teachers. It is not surprising that there was concern about the financial risks involved when a remark and a brief report for one candidate costs £16.

I welcome Mr Day's assertion that the AEB is prepared to carry out a complete remark of a centre's scripts entirely at the board's expense when there is cause for concern on the part of a headteacher. It is to be hoped that, as the exam boards reorganize to cope with the General Certificate of Secondary Education, they move towards an open system of moderation. Despite the remark that was carried out at this centre there remains considerable unease about this year's results.

**STUART SATINET**  
Headteacher  
East Bergholt High School  
Colchester, Essex

## Sold out

Sir - As the publisher responsible for the Revised Nuffield A level chemistry course, I was not at all surprised to read of Robin Pike's irritation (TES, November 23) that he had had to start the new academic year without copies of *Student's Book 1*. I entirely sympathize with him, and the other teachers who were in the same position: the absence of the books will have made their job harder than it need have been.

A reprint was ordered as soon as we realized that we had underestimated demand, and thanks to the speed and efficiency of our printers, copies left the press on December 14th. I am sure that all those who have been affected will be satisfied with the result.

**ANDREW RANSOM**  
Publishing manager  
Longman  
Harlow, Essex

## Point missed

Sir - Your editorial (TES, December 7) misses the point entirely. It is the issue and philosophy behind the employment suggestions that we in the NUT object to. By opposing such suggestions it is the NUT that is trying to head off further disaster.

Already thousands of caring and hard-working classroom teachers are finding that they have larger classes, less marking time and a much bigger non-teaching workload. To improve classroom performance and allow us more time to deal with our pupils' real problems the NUT has taken professional decisions.

Midday supervision, covering for absent colleagues, assessment and compulsory meetings after school do a lot to interfere with a teacher's efficiency. All these suggestions will certainly keep teacher numbers down - by ensuring that teachers on the normal establishment are "used" for a variety of activities for many hours each day.

Any teacher with experience knows that a professional commitment means really getting to know the pupils and then developing them to their full potential. For such a task we must have time to think, to prepare, to discuss, to mark and to analyse results. We must also have manageable numbers of pupils and classes.

The NUT is in favour of improving conditions for teachers and pupils. If the employers' proposals are implemented, teachers will surely be forced to "free-wheel" through some lessons just to keep enough energy for one or two classes a day, their dinner duty, dealing with someone else's class, their assessment interviews and their evening preparations.

Standards will inevitably fall and teachers will be subverted to further paper over the cracks. But the Government will have achieved what it wants - a cheap, second rate public education system.

**VIBURTON**  
Secretary  
West Cornwall and Isle of Scilly  
Teachers' Association

## Calculated attack

Sir - We are writing to you with regard to Second opinion (TES, December 7) written by our headmaster, Neil Ransom. His rather bland presentation of the employers' proposals for restructuring excited some discussion in the staffroom and cannot be allowed to pass without comment.

Interestingly, a majority of teachers at Wreake Valley College are members of the NUT. At a meeting held on November 29 we voted overwhelmingly (there was one abstention) to endorse the NUT national executive's uncompromising rejection of the employers' proposals as constituting even a basis for negotiation. We feel that we have been treated shamefully by our employers and that these proposals are the final insult.

Where Neil Ransom sees them as "almost inevitable" and as "a positive basis for discussion", we see only a calculated attempt to dramatically and irreversibly worsen our conditions of service, to divide the profession forever into the judged and the judges and to condemn us to inadequate scales of pay which we will be too weak and divided ever to remedy.

We also take great exception to his unfortunate remark that he wonders whether those most outraged are the few who work to the minimum, and can assure him that at Wreake Valley College this is certainly not the case.

One last point: we find it increasingly disturbing to note the widening gap that seems to be developing between what heads regard as adequate and proper for their staff and as adequate and proper for themselves.

Signed by 26 staff  
Wreake Valley College  
Parkstone Road  
Syston  
Leicester

## Optional cane

Sir - Peter Newell (Platform, November 20) says that it would be "judicious" even "utter lunacy", to allow parents to consent to, or forbid the corporal punishment of their children at school. He also refers to the 1976 year-old settlement of the *Mrs X v UK* Strachan case under which the Government paid £2,300 to the parent of a child who had been beaten. "One cannot QC", we are told, think total

# NUT move raises threat of poverty and anarchy

Sir - Having read the press accounts of the way in which the NUT effectively destroyed the pay structure talks and then your leading article on the subject and the various letters of December 7, I, like your correspondent, J. Hipkin, feel nothing but acute disappointment and anxiety at the current situation regarding teachers' pay and conditions of service.

You are quite right to ask the question: "Are the structure proposals so abhorrent as to be totally unacceptable?" When all the action of a largely united teaching force last summer only succeeded in producing an extra half per cent following arbitration, do the leaders of the NUT seriously think that they can achieve anything better for their members this time than the main professional grade proposed of £8,500-£11,800 and the very considerable increases for heads of small schools?

What is more to the point, do their members really think they can, and has anyone asked their opinion? For most teachers the proposals of the management side, viewed purely in financial terms, must be attractive. The problems, therefore, are seen as the strings attached in the shape of regular assessment and of certain contractual obligations, and they have to be seen as truly enormous objections to offset the proposed financial rewards.

In "Talkback", Mark Kirkby poses the question: "How can good leadership be coupled with having the job of deciding who will get paid more or less?" Surely, whenever a head at present recommends someone for promotion to Scale 2 or 3 in preference to someone else he is doing precisely that. It is part of the head's job to make that judgment, to justify it and to withstand criticism from those who would have preferred him to have decided otherwise.

When at present a head writes a reference on someone who has applied for promotion, he makes professional observations on that teacher's ability to do his job. I would not dispute the fact for one moment that we need better in-service training for heads, deputies, heads of department and pastoral heads, but that training must be in management because teachers occupying and aspiring to the positions mentioned need to be skilled in organizational techniques, in running meetings, in guiding and, when necessary, evaluating colleagues' work.

## Ironie policy

Sir - To say in your editorial on the pay structure talks (TES, December 7) that "the NUT's attitude is not easy to explain" is putting it very mildly indeed. The NUT fears the pay structure talks for the simple reason that the new pay deal and conditions of service will go a long way towards restoring the public image of teachers as an independently-minded professional body of people.

The newly founded professionalism that would inevitably follow in the wake of the proposed new deal would logically lead to the demand for the establishment of a teachers' council to determine proper professional codes of conduct and qualifications for entry into the profession.

In short, the whole pseudo-professional structure on which the NUT is based and the schizophrenic nature of

its worn-out and out-dated policies would be called into question.

It is ironic that the NUT should be so fiercely opposed to assessment on behalf of a membership that earns its living, in the main, out of the assessment of other lesser mortals not endowed with the infallibility of the NUT.

The solution is simple. The other unions should be permitted to negotiate separately a new deal based on new conditions of service for their own members. I have no doubt that the majority of NUT members would vote for their feet, and the result? Death of the pseudo-professional. Long live the professional.

**M A HOWSEMAN**  
Headmaster  
Fleetwood Heath High School  
Lancs

It is possible, of course, that senior teachers become assistant heads in which case they are on a different salary scale, but not all schools have either the points or are a group that allows for senior teachers to move to this category. What we are, in fact, saying is that senior teachers as such are abolished and become members of the new Scale 3 - that is people who have a number of colleagues working under them.

I am writing to put on record that, as far as the situation in this school is concerned, the senior teacher certainly deserves every penny that he is paid. He is certainly not overvalued for the work he does. It is most important that colleagues who give of their best, who have the interest of the pupils at heart, and unstintingly devote their working life to their profession, should be recognized as such. And I certainly wish to make sure that, as far as I am concerned, I very much value what my colleague is doing.

**I STEVENS**  
Head  
Wald of Kent Grammar  
School for Girls  
Tonbridge

**MICHAEL KENNY**  
Impney Close  
Church Hill North  
Redditch  
Worce

applied when clear parental objections were voiced to corporal punishment. During my seven years in *status pupillar* there was one occasion when, through misunderstanding, an out-rageously naughty girl was caned whose parents in fact objected to corporal punishment, though the head evidently understood she had caned blackie to wallop. Our unfortunate headmistress was thereupon (at the instigation and expense, it was said, of an outside pressure group) actually



Walter Roy  
**Misinterpreted**

Sir - Dr Walter Roy, chairman of the education committee of the National Union of Teachers, writes (TES, December 14) that my advocacy of linking teachers' performance and pay takes for granted that fair and accurate assessment procedures exist. That is exactly the opposite of what I wrote in the article (TES, November 30) to which he refers.

My actual words on the subject of methodology of assessment were: "The question who is to carry out annual assessment of teachers is what burns people up. The latest management proposals fail to resolve that problem by about the length of the Great Wall of China. If ever there was a time we needed a General Teaching Council, this is it".

Either Dr Roy did not actually read my article, or he deliberately sets out to misinterpret it. The second position would be entirely consistent with the general approach of the NUT to the latest salary structure proposals.

**PETER DAWSON**  
General secretary  
Professional Association of Teachers

## Cutting insult

Sir - It is with grave concern that I read the article "Top teachers face pay cut under I.e.a. proposals" (TES, November 23).

If it was intended to insult the senior echelons of the teaching profession and to spoil their well-deserved weekend, it certainly succeeded, and I cannot imagine that it is only the senior teacher in this school that must have felt galled by the implication that some teachers are overvalued for the work they do and that the new system would actually envisage a cut in earnings for those colleagues.

I have never ever heard of anyone in industry, or anywhere else for that matter, who, on restructuring of salary scales, would expect to receive less money than he did before. Of course, I know that most senior teachers will be on protected salaries, but when one of them retires, is it reasonable to expect the replacement to receive less than his or her predecessor?

It is possible, of course, that senior teachers become assistant heads in which case they are on a different salary scale, but not all schools have either the points or are a group that allows for senior teachers to move to this category. What we are, in fact, saying is that senior teachers as such are abolished and become members of the new Scale 3 - that is people who have a number of colleagues working under them.

I am writing to put on record that, as far as the situation in this school is concerned, the senior teacher certainly deserves every penny that he is paid. He is certainly not overvalued for the work he does. It is most important that colleagues who give of their best, who have the interest of the pupils at heart, and unstintingly devote their working life to their profession, should be recognized as such. And I certainly wish to make sure that, as far as I am concerned, I very much value what my colleague is doing.

**I STEVENS**  
Head  
Wald of Kent Grammar  
School for Girls  
Tonbridge

## Lighter side

Sir - At a time when morale in the teaching profession is at a low point, when teachers, hard-pressed and undervalued, are none the less expected to work even harder to come to terms with an array of new initiatives, it may seem increasingly difficult to put on a happy face in the classroom. I hope not. At Bosworth College, where I have spent most of my teaching career, humour (however created) has always been regarded as an important element in developing the good relationships with students on which effective teaching is based.

Recently, after recounting some amusing anecdotes that have occurred during my 13 years of teaching, I felt teachers everywhere could give this view a welcome boost and help to raise the spirits of their colleagues. I wish to compile a collection of humorous stories that reveal the lighter side of classroom life. I am convinced there is a wealth of such stories and would be very pleased to hear from anyone who can help me in this venture.

**PAUL DICKENS**  
Sixth Form Tutor  
Bosworth College  
Leicester Lane  
Deaford  
Leics

## Inward art

Sir - Melvyn Elphie (TES, December 7) objects to David Hargreaves's description of arts teachers as inward-looking, but his chosen peaks of human artistic achievements are exceedingly biased in Mr Elphie's favour.

Why Michelangelo's David, rather than a great medieval cathedral? Why Hamlet, rather than Homer? Why are Mr Elphie's examples all taken from post-Renaissance Europe? How ethnocentric can you get?

Even so, they are a poor answer to David Hargreaves's charge. Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis*, for example, was created within a long and rich tradition of Christian sacred music. It was certainly not created only through "tireless creative introspection".

Why did Mr Elphie not choose examples which owed less to the artist's situation in society? Was it perhaps because he would admit that they do not include any works of the highest rank?

**DAVID WELLS**  
68 Lady Margaret Road  
London NW5

## Missing basics

Sir - I can tell Dr Barker Lunn where parents obtain their "assumed stereotype" of junior education (TES, December 7). Their children attend schools like my neighbourhood ILEA school (which has, incidentally, an excellent catchment area).

My son is nine. He has not yet been taught one multiplication table, let alone given any practice in such computation skill. Other basic computation is ignored amid a confused welter of modern maths.

Last year he received no instruction in either spelling or handwriting.

Back to basics? - our poor ILEA-taught children should be so lucky!

**JANE BARKER**  
17 Philbeach Garden  
London SW5

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## Gift of the gab

MELVYNELPHIE

Recent articles and letters in *The TES* along with the GCSE proposals and HM's *English 5 to 16* document, have once again focused attention on oral English. In particular, *The TES* of November 30, contained three letters on the subject with which I should have liked to have agreed.

From Leicester, Bolton and Grimsby they come, supporting earlier contributions proclaiming the clear manifesto: "Spoken English must be included in English exams." I cheer at that as loudly as anyone. As Fred Slack says, "We communicate far more frequently by speaking than we ever do by writing." Hear Hear! But at this point the writers put in a claim for the assessability of oral skills of which I am at best sceptical.

My scepticism turns to something less restrained when I find CSE practice in this area invoked as "valuable experience", "successful organization" and "very worthwhile work". The printed word is not the place for my instinctive oral response.

I have taught and examined CSE for 12 years. It has provided my pupils and myself with a fine stimulus, a clear framework, a wide range of interesting and relevant materials and a sense of the importance of the individual's range of language needs - comments I could scarcely make of the moribund GCSE.

But every year my colleagues and I are appalled at the travesty of the oral examinations. I have experienced these in many schools under various conditions and arrangements: individual conversation with reading; indi-

vidual oral without reading; with prepared talk; without prepared talk; group discussion; continuous assessment within English; cross-curricular assessment - the range of situations alone is sufficient to invalidate any result.

But one consistency does emerge: the oral result's ability to skew - in either direction - the reliable marks gained in coursework over a two-year period, and the relatively accurate written exam results which generally reflect the coursework achievement. In one 15-minute chat, it is possible for a pupil to change a grade 4 to a grade 2 pass or vice versa.

Maria Landy appears to applaud this. But how is any potential user of such a certificate to know whether it represents a semi-literate gifted with the gab or a pupil with reasonable ability in writing and understanding who, as a result of shyness, alienation, teacher-pupil relationship, or mere adolescence, "falls" his oral? The fact that you cannot tell what the grade actually means goes some way to explaining why CSE English has never achieved the recognition from employers it otherwise deserved.

No, 20-year experience of CSE - with all its good intention, industry, sense of purpose and commitment - should assure us that oral skills cannot yet be fairly assessed within an overall grade. Whether they should be assessed separately is a moot point, and one on which I keep an open mind: the importance of oracy certainly needs practical recognition by pupils, teachers and employers, and examination is one way of ensuring that this is achieved.

But I am by no means sure that telling a 16-year-old he is "below average" in this area will do anything much to develop his oral skills, the first requisite of which is self-confidence. Far better, I think, to use written exams to test what can be tested (and in English that is precious little) and leave employers to conduct their own

orals, popularly known as "interviews".

Melvyn Elphie is head of English at Portsmouth Sixth Form College.



## The Queen's other speech

ALAN HOWE

There are so many fallacies and illogicalities in Marguerite Earl's piece "Queen's Speech" (Talkback, *TES*, November 30) that one is tempted to dismiss the argument entirely, were it not for the fact that she is, I believe, voicing a view held, perhaps less openly, by a considerable number of people.

Of course, one of the functions of school ought to be to ensure that its pupils are able to communicate effectively in the spoken word when they leave. The controversy arises over what the phrase "communicate effectively" entails. Should we be aiming to get our pupils to ape the variety of the

English language used by our monarch, or encourage them to use their own accents and home-grown language resources in classroom, interview or social discourse. It is significant that the Assessment of Performance Unit in its 1982 Primary Survey Report, *Language Performance in Schools*, has this to say about "communicative effectiveness":

"We have also found that grammatical variation associated with dialect usage has seldom been an issue in assessing pupils' communicative skills. Although there are occasional instances of the use of grammatical constructions which differ from those characteristics of Standard British English, in the assessment situation pupils overwhelmingly use the grammatical forms typical of standard usage. Where the occasional dialect form does occur, this presents few problems of understanding on the part of listeners, even when these come from a region which is not that of the pupils being assessed."

So, how does this view match up to Marguerite Earl's complaint about "slovenly speech"? I have no doubt that she *wasn't* able to understand what the young school-leavers had to say, but I am tempted to suggest that this arose not because of their inability to pronounce their words "correctly", but because of her own prejudices about language which actually prevented her from listening effectively. Inadequacy can exist on the part of the listener as well as the speaker.

In fact, her argument exhibits a number of fallacies which need pointing out. First, she assumes that "correct" spoken English ought to conform to the written standard, with her comment about "not finishing off words". One has only to listen closely to standard RP speakers to discover, in fact, that this "expensive" variety no more follows in sound the rules of written English than does Cockney or Scouse. It would be true to say that

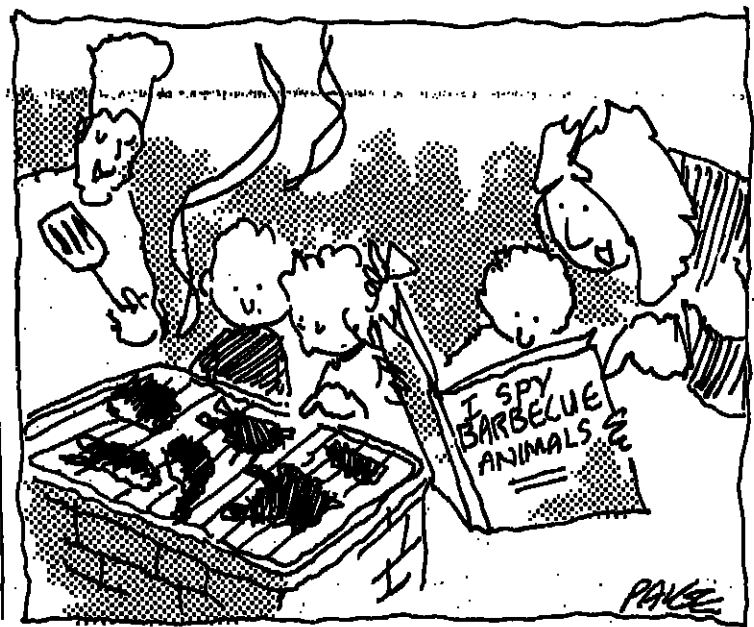
"the Queen's English" does follow the rules of orthography more closely, but as we usually only hear the Queen speak in highly formal situations, reading from a prepared text, it would be ridiculous to suggest that this highly artificial variety should be seen as appropriate to most speech situations.

Second, she seems to assume that one variety of spoken English (and a minority variety, at that) is somehow better suited to the demands of most communicative situations than other varieties. There is no linguistic evidence that supports this view. She, however, goes further than this by suggesting that the users of non-standard varieties are inadequate human beings by virtue of their speech habits. It perhaps ought to be pointed out that any feeling of inadequacy in non-standard users is far more likely to be due to the attitude of people such as Marguerite Earl, with their ill-formed prejudices, than the result of any deficiency in the speech itself.

The third, and possibly the most dangerous fallacy in her argument, is the idea that you can publicly denigrate a young person's own language without damaging their self-esteem and without, as a result, the danger of alienating them from the whole educational process. In the best classrooms, pupils are encouraged to use spoken language as a means of learning. At the same time, they'll develop their linguistic abilities and so become better communicators by being given the opportunity to use their own resources for language in a wide variety of contexts.

Marguerite Earl's prescription for a recurring dose of the Queen's English, administered in isolation from the rest of the curriculum, will almost certainly result in greater, not less, inarticulacy, as thousands of children, their language under attack, retreat into silence.

Alan Howe is director of the Wiltshire Oracy Project.



meat-eating on a world scale? Rightly encouraged to feel compassion for those suffering in the Third World, should children not also be given the hard facts that it takes nearly half the world's output of grain to fatten livestock in the affluent countries, cereal that could and should be directed to the starving?

The interest in vegetarianism has never been greater. Is it not time for a massive rethink in our schools? Should the children not be presented with the truth and allowed to make an informed decision for themselves about what they choose to eat? And should they not enjoy a choice of menu at school which includes not an apology for a vegetarian meal, but a dish which reflects the knowledge of nutrition and sensitivity of attitude which has gone into its making?

What we eat undoubtedly affects our thoughts and our thoughts form our emotional attitudes. Simple beginnings can set the foundations for a healthier, more compassionate and harmonious life.

ment of the superpower conflict of not mentioning the "all important distinction between totalitarian and representative government". Since Cox and Scruton have never discussed this with the teaching staff and we have never attended a single lesson at the college, they cannot know what we mention or do not mention.

In fact, under the syllabus heading, "Origins of the Cold War", we do examine the ideological division between East and West and use documents such as the text of the Truman doctrine and George Kennan's 1947 article advocating containment to illustrate this point.

On these and many other points Cox and Scruton have simply read into the syllabus what they wish to find. We reject utterly any suggestion of indoctrination. We do not have "a simple and preferred" model of the present international crisis. In teaching peace studies our intention is to develop critical, constructive and independent thinking on the part of the students while at the same time raising their awareness of issues which throughout their lives. Our objectives are dismissed contemptuously by Cox and Scruton as meaning no more than that "the student should grow up". I hope education does have something to do with that.

John Wilford is head of history at Atlantic College, South Glamorgan.

## The cattle are lowing

JANIS HARDIMAN

It is a curious fact that from infancy children are taught to recognize and to love farmyard animals, learn to read from books bursting with illustrations of friendly cows and pigs, frisking lambs and cheerful hens and geese, are later taken to farms to enjoy even closer contact with their animal friends, at Christmas are exhorted to appreciate the gentle qualities of the ox and the lamb, to lift no other voice to sing of all creatures great and small - and at school dinner are encouraged to eat bits of them.

Does one really have to be vegetarian to sense that somewhere along the

line there is a gap in our awareness, a gap which swallows the anomalies, dulls our reason and casts a curious veil of ignorance over us? For, who can happily face up to the implications of what it really means to eat the flesh of creatures we profess to love? As the advertisements tell us: "It's not that people don't care. It's just that they don't think."

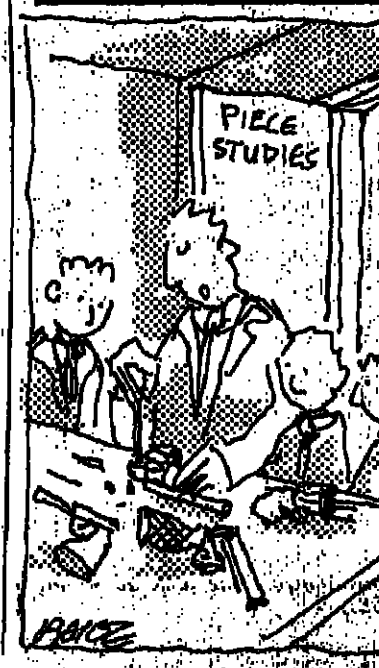
Many children are natural vegetarians and from my experience of 17 years as a teacher I have found them intensely interested in the subject and eager, not only for some straight answers, but for debate on its wider aspects, both spiritually and from the standpoint of health.

No child would particularly relish a visit to the local slaughterhouse and yet, as teachers, should we subscribe to the great cover-up, orchestrated by the media, meant to prevent in the child's little packets at the supermarket and boxes of battery-produced eggs all marked with rustic "down on the farm" labels?

And what of the implications of

## Grow in peace

IAN WILSON



In their pamphlet *Peace Studies: A critical survey*, Caroline Cox and Roger Scruton attack the concept of peace studies in general and the syllabus taught at Atlantic College (for which I am one of those responsible) in particular. They believe that peace studies is "downright disreputable - as part of the school curriculum", and they "find it hard to see in the syllabus of AC anything more than an attempt to direct the attention of pupils to words a teacher has preferred, but politically contentious, model of the present international crisis".

"The views of Cox and Scruton are often provocatively expressed; it is surprising to find the Brandt Report described as 'nurturing' 'comic-strip anti-capitalism'. Perhaps as a result, their current pamphlet has received much publicity and even the *Comment* columns of this paper has stated that the royalties it has been been convincing."

Their case is for what they themselves call "the old-fashioned curriculum", incorporating subjects which are not contestable, in which there is an accepted body of knowledge to be communicated and which "force the pupil to understand something which has no immediate bearing on his experience".

Peace studies is just one of many subjects, including also politics, economics and geography, which, they contend, are taught in schools in which they are characterized as "academic" and are barely able to grasp an

elementary argument". That reflects an unacceptably narrow view of the role of schools in the lives of young people. Academic training is, of course, an essential element in the objectives of education, but this should be viewed as no more than one important point of the broader goal of education, which is to help young people to understand and to participate in their world.

If it is important that pupils should be able to make judgments about issues beyond their own experience (eg who was responsible for the Franco Prussian War) it is not also important that they should be able to make judgments about issues which do, or might, immediately concern them, (eg why is human behaviour so frequently aggressive, why has it proved impossible to establish peace in Ulster, why is there tension between the US and USSR)?

The possibility that it may be more difficult to teach and learn about such issues because they are contemporary and controversial is surely no argument for abandoning the attempt. In a democracy, which prides itself on individual liberty, the right of the individual to be responsible for his own life and to participate in the making of collective decisions, it is essential that young people should gain experience of the "contestable" aspects of life. A curriculum, of course, is left entirely to other agencies: parents, schools, mass circulation newspapers, radio

and television; but that would be to leave a vital part of education more or less to chance. The advantage of schools is that they can and should raise such issues in a conscious, carefully-structured and thorough manner. Cox and Scruton deny that it is possible to teach peace studies in that "serious and responsible way". They wish to persuade their readers "not merely that this subject is often taught in a biased and irresponsible way, but that it could be taught in no other way".

To judge from the section of their pamphlet which refers to the Atlantic College course, Cox and Scruton have neither the understanding of the subject (their references to concepts such as structural violence and positive peace betray a serious lack of familiarity with the literature), nor the evidence of it in practice to make such a sweeping and damning assertion. Virtually every statement made about the course is a serious misrepresentation. According to Cox and Scruton, the students learn that "the strategy of peace" is a strategy of non-violence. In fact, the students make a critical appraisal of non-violence theories and practices, considering as they do so, the concept of the "just war".

Teaching about fascism in history does not make one a fascist; teaching about non-violence in peace studies does not make one a pacifist. We are also accused, in our treat-

# Open season

This week Jaci Stephen won the Catherine Pakenham Award for young women writers with this probationers' guide to parents' evenings.

Raymond is a lazy little sod who has no chance of passing anything but water. So don't give me exams. I know all about those - eight O levels, three A levels, a degree and a teaching certificate just to get this far - so don't go blaming the whole damn system on me, I'm just doing my job and if you ask me, your son . . . I break off quickly and make hasty adjustments to my mental script as Marguerite's parents approach my desk. My sharply developed intuition enables me to adopt the most appropriate tone.

"Mr and Mrs Livingstone, I presume." I am in luck. The couple look nervous. An encouraging start to the evening. I stand and thrust out a confident hand towards the mother. She is exceptionally tall, the height that devours with mere presence. I sit again. The husband is much smaller - absurdly so. I try to catch his good eye but cannot help following the ball of the one travelling like a moving bull's eye target towards his nose. I relax into my managerial role, the couple fitting the bill of a holiday camp duo coming for an audition. A gentle pair.

"We want him to do O level and nothing else." I am mistaken. "He's not going to do down a form. English is very important . . ." I know that or I wouldn't damn well be teaching it. "We want him to be a barrister . . . Don't we?" She prods her husband sharply on the arm. "I said, don't we?" He topples on his chair and nods acquiescently; a dummy that has not yet learnt the art of accompanying the ventriloquist's voice with facial expressions.

I shrink in my chair as the woman's mouth goes more widely and I am bombed with spittle. "Well let's . . ." I attempt tentatively, raising a subtle hand to moisturize my cheeks with her liquid venom.

"O level or nothing." Every teacher dreads parents' evenings and, in particular, this all too common blitzkrieg parent, the very worst sort. The blitzkriegs pride themselves on their experience in knowing how to handle Teachers, their children having now reached form five or six. They are only too aware of how the newcomer to the profession is more likely to shrivel under close scrutiny and they take great delight in observing the cheeks of you, the enemy, alternate between shades of vanilla fear and strawberry embarrassment. But now, following careful research carried out on hundreds of parents over several years, I am able to offer a comprehensive guide designed to dispel the fears of the innocent probationer when it comes to handling parents.

Teachers are generally given a bad press and the blitzkrieg is always equipped with the latest *Daily Telegraph* survey on the disasters of left-wing bias in education. But if you are able to survive the initial attack - terrifying though it may be - tensions can soon be dissipated. For the blitzkriegs are like unsuccessful long-distance runners; they spend months building up reserves of energy to meet the competition and then, once they hit the track, pick up speed all too soon. By the time they are only half way around, their energy is expended.

It is important to be able to distinguish the real blitzkriegs from those who are only acting the part. These second-rate fusiliers are easy to spot: when they arrive at the desk, purple-faced and foaming at the mouth, their cheeks are already bulging with ammunition. Their build-up has invariably begun at home, the additional fire coming from the last scene prior to their leaving the house:

"Now are you sure that's what she said?"  
"Yes, mum."  
"And you're sure you gave the work in on time?"  
"Of course."  
"But she still said you were definitely going down to the next set?"  
"Yes, dad."  
"Right."  
"Right."  
"Let's go then."  
Door slams. Angel Child bites his nails.

Both parents unload at the very sight of you. Have no fear. This is another sign of their inexperience, thereby substantiating other evidence of their fusilier quality. The blitzkrieg knows that one dictator is more effective than two opposing minions. At this point it is safe to attempt the cold cup of coffee and stale ginger nut which magically appeared on the desk and then,

when the tirade of abuse finally expires, acknowledge that you agree with everything that has been said.

The fusiliers will never remember anyway; their impotency is a premature concern for getting it all out with little knowledge of what to do with it thereafter. The additional shock of your magnanimous response will lift them to their feet with profuse apologies for wasting your time, followed by a backward retreating exit accompanied by small humble bows.

"You were lying, weren't you?" Angel Child is greeted with a clip across the ear. This technique is especially successful when tested against parents of pupils in forms one and two, but beware of trying it out on a fusilier with a child in form three or four. They require a special sort of handling. Less naive than the young fusilier but lacking the essential skills to qualify for the blitzkrieg category, their double exclamation will carry on quite happily until you reach for the coffee. Your teeth sink into the ginger nut and . . . Stop. Silence. Each parent looks at the other with a See-I-told-you-that's-all-they-do-anyway expression.

They take advantage of your silence to consolidate their position; they attack you with a question like doctors insisting upon conversation

your husband has given Andrew an inferiority complex?"

Diversion complete. For the real stalwarts, stuff two ginger nuts into your mouth and talk fast.

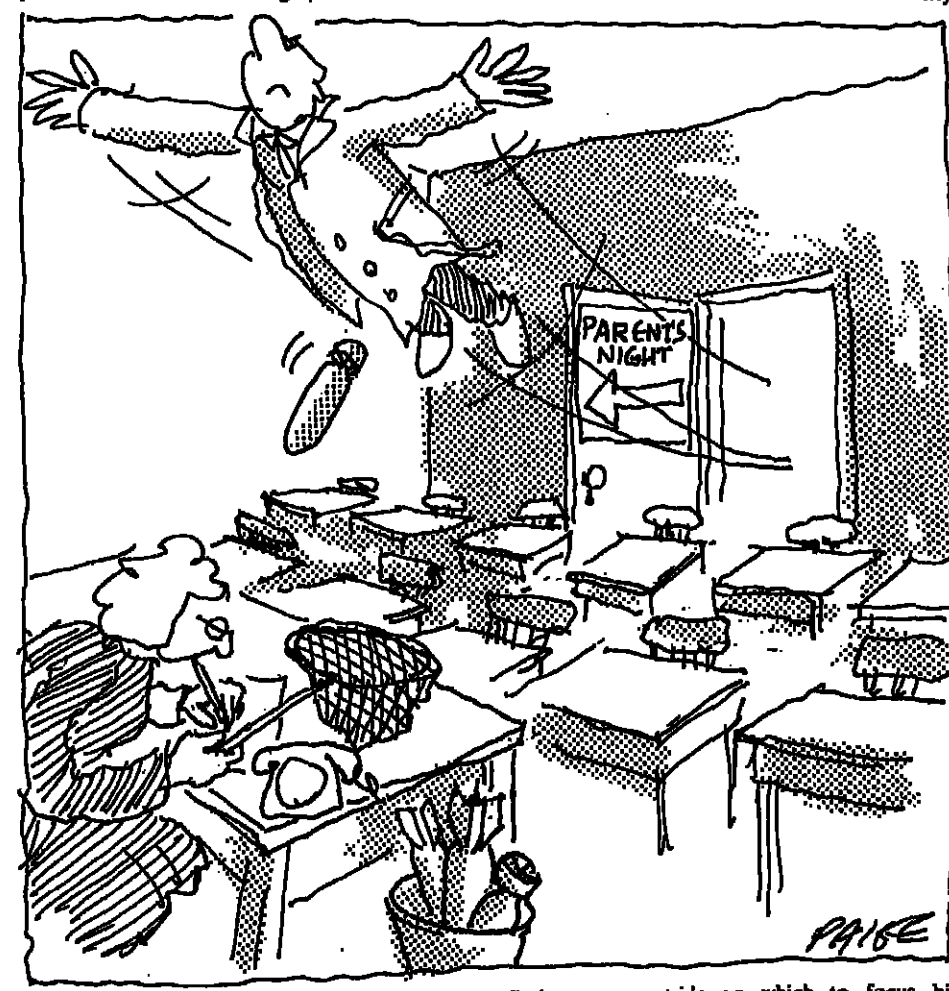
The confidence tricksters are the most difficult parents to spot; the genuine personal problem wears many strange disguises and is often indistinguishable from that of the charlatan. Many parents, once they see what a sympathetic, humanistic, loving being you are, put devious methods into practice. They share confidences; give you intimate details of their family life - bank statements, unbalanced relations, lack of fibre in the staple diet of the household - in the hope that you will make allowances for their child in the future.

"The problem is", I say to a frowning mother, "Anne has missed so much work. I know she's been unwell but . . ."

The mother exhales confidential breath towards me. "But you see, there are a lot of personal difficulties." She winks. "Can't be helped."

"I see. Well, as I said . . ."

"Her womb." She delivers the statement as I imagine the Angel Gabriel might have in consultation with God. Her husband conveniently



finds a tree outside on which to focus his attention.

"FFT" - Pre-period tension? Post-prandial tapeworms? - "They want to scrape her."

"Well, I'm willing to . . ."

"But there are problems." Another wink. "You see . . . she's still a virgin" - announced ceremoniously.

"Oh."

"But it's given her a lot of worry. We're Mormons, you see. And the condition could worsen unless something's done about it." The husband buries his head a little deeper into his collar. "So what do you suggest?"

An inconceivable problem. Sympathetic though you must be to the problems of the individual, don't be diverted.

"Well, she needs to brush up on her Pope." Parents' evenings are hard work for all concerned. Like a chat show host the teacher must change his/her role according to the personalities of the guests who, for reasons of propriety, must act as if they are always On Camera; remembering that it is Angel Child and not they, who has to return to school the following day.

The most enjoyable guest is the sycophant. Here, the work involves coping with the social set-up of the interview in addition to the educational welfare of the child. Unfortunately, the

sycophant is usually partner to a less sycophantic male.

"I don't know how the pupils manage to concentrate with such attractive teachers in the classroom," says a smiling father. His wife scowls. "Hmph! They didn't have kids teaching when I was at school", is intended for my ears when she leaves. It is advisable not to flirt with an already-mated sycophant.

A more relaxed approach can be adopted with those parents who arrive mate-less. They do not feel the need for safety in numbers and are usually of a more genial nature. They are also pleasantly sycophantic.

A foreign mother clutches my arm and pulls me passionately towards her: "My dorr - ht - her . . . She think you won - derr - fuul! You excellent teacher." I smile. I know.

Such enthusiasm is catching and it is as well to learn right at the start of your teaching career that nothing enhances the teacher/parent relationship better than the open expression of mutual admiration. However, there are definite ways of going - and not doing - about such a course of action.

"Gosh, you don't look old enough to be Tracy's mother", I smile.

"Well actually, I'm not", she blushes. "It's his second marriage and I . . . uh, we . . . that is . . ."

"Oh."

"You see, when I met John (that's Tracy's father), my ex-husband . . . comforted, I suppose you could say, Eleanor (that's Tracy's real mother), and then married her. Belinda (that's my real daughter, the eldest child) is with her father and I've kept Tim. Eleanor and Frank (that's my ex-husband) have also got Kevin and Lucy - that's Eleanor's and John's other two."

"I see."

Such complications are demanding upon the psyche and will lower your tolerance level. It is important to remain as patient for as long as you are able. Then blow. But quietly. There will be the isolated problem for which there is no categorical solution, but remember that the first answer that springs to mind is definitely the wrong one: "All this literature lark. Fantasy! Facts is what they need today." Are, actually, "Sex and travel. That's all he wants out of life, so what can I say?" F . . . off? Or there will be more basic problems of communication:

"Well in all confidence", I hiss into an ear. "I don't think the teacher before me was all that helpful."

"Pardon?"

A little more emphatically - "Mrs - Rogers - last - year - not - helpful." I give a vigorous shake of my head.

"I didn't quite . . ."

"YOUR SON'S TEACHER - A MORON!"

"Oh."

Parents' evenings can play strange tricks on the brain and after several harrowing hours, beware the well-worn phrases you find yourself regurgitating with expressionless ease:

"Well I'm afraid Julie hasn't been behaving very well lately."

"Oh?" the parents look surprised.

"I've had to move her to a different seat . . . She doesn't do her homework . . . She's easily distracted in class . . . Why, only yesterday . . . Blank faces opposite. Recognition dawns - Shit, wrong child. "Mind you, she's been a lot better today."

This is the time to pack up and leave. With any luck the parents will be as tired as you and by the time they reach home, your words, along with those of all other teachers, will have become one speech. The only comeback is likely to be the odd comment in class the following day. I am informed: "My father thinks you're awful short, miss". Thanks.

Be prepared now for the PPD (post-parental depression) that will strike you down in the weeks following your first parents' evenings. Raymond will be just as lazy, Andrew will still be attempting a competent sentence, and Anne's womb will continue to protect her from Pope. Most strong will be the sense of the child as an unconcerned third party, the one member of the trio who remains unscathed by the parent/teacher confrontation.

But take heart from the words of John Wollenden: "Schoolmasters and parents exist to be grown out of." By which scope parents' evening is a pretty outdated concept. Does Wollenden mean left behind, cast off, I wonder? Or, writing in *The Sunday Times* (1958), can we interpret a double entendre? Schoolmasters (mistresses too, I presume) and parents - the foundation out of which our children grow - and must continue to grow - from?

Jaci Stephen taught English in Oxfordshire and South Glamorgan before she took up writing full-time in 1983.

20.12.84



## FEATURES

# The fur coated anarchist

Nick Baker meets Britain's most enduring children's personality



The words, "Bye bye everyone, bye bye", deserve a place in the *Oxford Book of Quotations*. They are stamped on the nation's consciousness along with the monochrome image of a nondescript middle-aged man, his face covered in water, paint or custard, stoically waving to camera. By his side, a bland-faced glove puppet teddy bear, his eyes set wide apart in a dumb-insolence stare, also waving.

Sooty, aged 36, star of stage and screen, conjuror, multi-instrumentalist and silent anarchist, is a strong contender for the title of Britain's most popular and enduring TV personality. The statistics earn him a place in the *Guinness Book of Records*. For 32 years, he has regularly commanded audiences around the 5 and a half million mark as well as making hugely popular stage appearances the length and breadth of the country. He entertains millions in Australia and New Zealand, both on TV and live on stage. Perhaps the Queen's Award for Industry would be more appropriate. One only hopes that Prince Philip has forgotten the incident with the water pistol.

The Sooty story firmly belongs in the rags to riches category: 1948 saw him languishing, unbought in a Blackpool toyshop, waiting for Harry Corbett, electrical engineer and part-time children's magician, to discover him.

For four years, Sooty helped in the act. Recognising a good thing when he saw it, he began to take over. In 1952, Sooty and Harry were invited to take part in an early children's broadcast. Sooty found the medium perfect for his brand of silent comedy. The BBC offered six more Saturday programmes. Harry's bosses refused him the time off. He took the plunge and made the programmes anyway, and handed in his notice. Stardom beckoned. Soon after, inspired by Muffin the Mule's success in toy marketing, Sooty, and Harry went into business with a leading toy manufacturer. Sootimania swept the country.

Sooty was teamed up with a dog who could squeak but not speak, was introduced to royalty and was often in the headlines. More often than not, the press took his side. Harry, for example, had it in mind to introduce Sooty to a suitable young lady bear, preferably one who was sensible enough to counterbalance the evident anti-social tendencies of the Sooty-Sweep partnership. When the BBC heard of this, Sooty became suddenly enmeshed in a front page story, with the BBC cast as party-poopers. They didn't want "sex creeping in", as they put it to Harry. Eventually, though, they gave in and Soo, whose soothing voice belonged at first to Harry's wife, Marjorie, made her debut. Luckily, Sweep liked her.

Sooty again became news when, in 1968, a BBC new broom suddenly fired Sooty. A nation was stunned. Luckily, Thames TV believed in Sooty's future and offered him work. Sooty sighed, almost audibly, with relief.

In 1975, Harry had a serious heart attack, right at the start of a Christmas run in a West End theatre. Not surprisingly, Sooty refused to go on alone. Luckily, Harry's son, Matthew, who had already occasionally been on Sooty's payroll as writer and musician, was available, and was asked to fill in. Previously, Matthew had trained as an actor and had made his living doing small stage roles and playing in a rock band, before landing a job with *Rainbow*, a Thames children's programme. Despite all this experience, he still felt anxious about stepping into Harry's shoes.

"With my dad seriously ill, I knew how much hung on not letting the show go under," he says. "We all knew that the first thing he would ask would be 'what's happened to the show?'" Thames TV producer Charles Warren persuaded him to give it a try, and sat in the theatre audience to see the result. Matthew knew that this was his TV audition as well as his debut in the *Sooty Show*. He was terrified. Luckily, things went well. Sooty took to him immediately, Sweep (as ever) copied Sooty and Soo responded favourably to Matthew's boyish enthusiasm.

At Tameside Theatre, Ashton Under Lyne, I watch Sooty and Matthew perform a charity matinee for handicapped and underprivileged children. Matthew, who writes all the music and scripts, has a last-minute chat with Connie Creighton, the other human in the show, and with his five-man stage team. Sooty concentrates

quietly in a corner.

While we wait, Matthew recalls another difficult moment in Sooty's and Sweep's public life. In one TV show entitled *Sooty's Pick Me Up*, Sweep drank some "medicine" concocted by Sooty, which drove him even more berserk than usual—so much so that he had to be placed in a "tranquilliser cabinet", from which he emerged, steaming and exhausted. One viewer complained to the IBA, the popular press got hold of it, and headlines like "Sooty the junkie" started to appear.

Sooty came out of the affair squeaky clean, but Matthew learnt a valuable lesson about how careful he had to be with scripts. The TV production office now has a *Sooty Rule Book*, outlining what he can and can't have in the show. Oddly enough, in the old days Sooty would hit Harry on the head with hammers and do tricks with cigarettes without protest from his audience.

Sooty's current live show, *Things That Go Bump in the Night* has no such oversights. It's a colourful mixture of spooky silliness, music and slapstick with bags of audience participation and lashings of look behind you. Any educational content is strictly incidental and unintentional. The sound of the 1,200-strong audience defies description. Backstage, during the interval, Ruth, an A level theatre studies student makes notes on the Sooty phenomenon. Matthew, heavily costumed, is drenched in sweat. Sooty lies inert, resting in a suitcase.

I ask Matthew whether he ever tires of the bear's naughtiness, or feels like hitting back. "Never", he answers emphatically. "Though sometimes I blame him for dragging me to work when I should be spending time with my family." Perhaps surprisingly, Sooty has never been a big part of Matthew Corbett's family life. "He's strictly a business partner. Well respected but separate. That's the difference between me and my father. When I was a kid, he even used to take Sooty on holiday with us."

During the break between the first and second show of the afternoon, I ask Sooty if he'll ever retire. "No", he says, through Matthew. "As long as I'm in the right hands." Sweep interjects with an uncharacteristically coarse remark about Matthew's fingernails. I leave, with the noise of the second audience ringing in my ears. Under my breath, I say: "Bye bye everyone. Bye bye".

## 1944 AND ALL THAT

In the last of the series looking back on the Education Act that provided secondary education for all, Bob Moon calls for a new attitude to parents.



1956, and then only through memory association. Jim Laker, you may remember, on a sticky Old Trafford wicket, bowled out the Australians taking 19-wickets in the match. Apart from the Ashes victory in Coronation Year it was, up to then, one of the most important moments of my life. Not for Jim, however, the deserved front page headlines. That classic mandarin capacity for ill-timing meant his exploits coincided with the build-up to the Suez crisis. Already

vexed with media misjudgment of priorities, I turned to *Sportsview* for recompense. None there was for, as I settled down to relive the triumphs, in came a tearful Mrs Jones from over the road. Her John had failed to gain admission to the local boys' grammar school. "Turn the sound down", said my mother. The great man took his wickets silently to the sound of Mrs Jones's lamentations. John's fate, not mine, seemed then in the natural order of things and, although as friends we grew apart, it troubled me little. Others, fortunately older and wiser, showed more concern. Brian Simon, in 1955 had published *The Common Secondary School*. Floud and Halsey were beginning on one of the more influential social science investigations, and the Labour Party was finding a cause.

By the time I obtained my first job on the eighth floor of one of London's largest comprehensive schools, the tide had turned. Reorganization was taxing the time and temper of administrators up and down the country. Public meetings reverberated to often polarized and bitter debate. Through the fire of deep ideological division comprehensives were born. The moment was hardly propitious for founding a new kind of schooling. As we know to our cost, it is the fate of innovation to be evaluated by criteria far stricter than those applied to previous arrangements. These new schools had to prove themselves not only against the ambitions of the social reformers, but also against the dominant ethic of the grammar schools.

Breaking free from the issues of these early debates has not been easy. At least, thanks to the Herculean efforts of the early headteachers and their staff, comprehensive schools, especially after Holt and Stroud, are well established. Within and towards these schools, however, many people still defer to the ethos of social and academic selection. Harry Judge, in *A Generation of Schooling*, suggests that the founding of *Private Eye* gave defiance a hard time. I'm not sure. It seems to me to be alive and well, although living underground.

Why do many parents, including teachers, bar the watching of *Orange Hill* while allowing, without question, the equally beastly and equally harmless antics of Billy Bunter? Why, in my *Times* this morning, is the first XI football clash between Charlton and Wimbledon reported

at length while the school in which I work, boasting Mark Wright as an old boy, and many appearances in the final rounds of the English Individual Schools' Trophy, receives local rather than national attention? Why does my son's *Playfair Cricket Annual*, like my own during the 50s, fail to note any educational experience for players who attended secondary modern schools?

Schooling for the majority in secondary schools, despite the heady expectations of 1944, just did not count and everyone knew it. Rather than provide a service we bestowed a privilege, and in that subtle distinction were formed the attitudes of a generation or more of school teachers. Newsom and ROSLA, a decade apart, tried unsuccessfully to redress the balance. Today we have the Low Achievers Programme.

Most significantly, in our deference to social and academic elitism, we have come to understand ability in so restricted a form that talents are suppressed and opportunities for advancement closed. Cyril Burt's ideas, laced later with rather crude interpretations of Piagetian psychology, gave a spurious scientific respectability to labels such as "more able" or "less able" or, perhaps the most demeaning of all "the average".

Average at what should we ask? At the scholastic and academic inheritance from the grammar schools would be my answer.

But is that good enough in a secondary school for all? The best brains (not the phrase) from the university close to me would not claim equal stature in the creative, aesthetic, interpersonal, practical, organisational, caring, even political, or whatever other domains we might choose. Why in schools must we categorise in ways that so remorselessly lower self esteem?

To argue like this, let me make clear, is not to advocate the dismantling of the academic culture and inheritance. Heaven, or anywhere else, forbid. It is, however, to argue that we must understand these dominant and controlling interests if the current mood for reform is to be realised.

Here is an example. In schools "average" is often symbolised by the word satisfactory. This frequently takes code form on a five-point scale: C3 for attainment; 3 for effort. Many children become C3 for life! Think of our own children at home. Among my four I cannot remember ever saying, as the raffia mats, models and felt pen

drawings are thrust before me: "Well Paul. Satisfactory."

I say "Good!" or sometimes "Good but..." but always "good". In schools the pressure to rank makes this elementary principle of motivation almost impossible to implement.

There is around the 1944 Act a sort of reverence that approaches almost biblical proportions. I find this difficult to understand. (Interestingly, in the health service, Bevan's 1948 Act is not used in the same way as a reference point). The current nostalgia for the Atlee years, Beveridge and all that, gives me some inkling of how important it was for the reformers of that period. Forty years on, however, by means of a Royal Commission, as some suggest, or through other means, we surely need a restatement of both rights and objections within our public education system.

Out of this might come a new understanding of parental interests and parental involvement. Out of deference has come a very narrow base for parental involvement in schooling. Grace and favour rather than entitlement too often characterises the process. Choice means a selection from rhetoric rather than a carefully formulated understanding of the service a school provides. Information about courses, how children are grouped, the style and nature of record keeping and ways of involving parents in the monitoring of progress, are issues where involvement should extend beyond reading the school brochure. At the same time we might look again at some parental obligations.

Above all, we could, because this could have a major impact on schooling, think of the education service that extends beyond either 16 or 19. At the moment the line at 16 rests, like an unconformity, against the rapidly changing world thereafter. The integration of education and training, the exciting possibilities for continuing education, the need for cooperative, rather than autonomous, schools and the potential for changed styles and structures within the new technology are all critical issues. The civil servants, preparing the 1944 Act in their wartime Bournemouth retreat, could hardly have anticipated the knowledge and opportunities we have today.

Bob Moon is head of Peers School, Oxford.

## FEATURES

# The taste of Christmas past

Children live out a Dickensian day in service at Speke Hall



Children from Liverpool are getting a taste of what it was like to be a Victorian servant in a large country house. At the National Trust's Speke Hall they spend a day learning how to wash clothes, set the table, clean, cook, dance and - at Yuletide - decorate the house in Victorian style.

Tony Tibbles, the curator, decided to invite schools to make use of the Hall during the quieter winter months, and his idea was welcomed by Bert Sorsby, a local museum education officer. Now 700 children visit the hall each winter, and no fewer than 43 schools are on the waiting list.

Teachers go on a half-day preliminary visit in October to "walk through" the day's activities. They are asked to bring the pupils in Victorian costumes, and dress up themselves, but the actual details are left to the teachers and resources of the school involved. One class of 9 and 10 year-olds from Prescott county primary school had borrowed waistcoats or long dresses and aprons and the girls had made their own cotton caps.

When they arrive, pupils are met by museum staff in costume as butler, housekeeper and maid. Pupils are then plunged into their roles as servants helping out for a day while the lady of the house, "Miss Watt", is away.

"I used to ceremoniously take off my digital watch and tell them to try to remember that we're in the nineteenth century, but launching straight into it seems to work just as well," says Bert Sorsby.

The children are given a tour of the hall, in which they are introduced to the "estate manager" (Tony Tibbles) and told about both the Watt family and features such as the priesthole and the resident ghost.

Small groups then take on one of several tasks, from cleaning silver and shoes to laying the table in preparation for Miss Watt's return. "The whole thing is geared to Miss Watt's coming, although she never does," says Bert Sorsby - "it's a bit like *Waiting for Godot*".

Under the supervision of museum and school staff, each group is responsible for handling original Victorian objects, including some of the hall's best china and glass, a huge old mangle, heavy irons and old-fashioned scales for measuring out flour. Original recipes from Mrs Weston are used and the table has to be scrubbed down

when the cooking is finished, "so as to keep away the mice".

"We try not to slip into the twentieth century", says Chris Ryan "housekeeper" and museum education officer. "But children do tend to notice things like smoke detectors". On the other hand, she finds that some of them are tempted to think that she and other "servants" actually live and work at Speke.

The same ambiguity is reflected in the talk of the children from Prescott school. "I think it's useful", said one boy. "Later on we might be able to come back and get a job here".

At mid-day the children play in the grounds with whatever old-fashioned toys have been improvised. Prescott school brought some wooden hoops founded in their own stockrooms, but a game of frisbee with cloth caps was more popular.

Back in the hall, the "estate manager" announces that he has received news of an engagement in the family and that Miss Watt had declared free time for celebration. The afternoon is given over to playing charades, singing Victorian songs and dancing. Teachers are asked to prepare a charade or one-act with their class before the visit, and they perform it in the main hall.

Bert Sorsby thinks it is important to "bring the children down" from the bustle of activity by reading a story. For the Prescott school pupils, the day ended with their teacher, Monica Williams, reading a ghost story by candlelight in one of the bedrooms.

Staff from Prescott were impressed by the way the day was organized. As one put it: "It's not just dates, it's active history - because they've actually joined in, they'll remember it for a long time."

Monica Williams had used the visit as a focus for a class project about the Victorians and she intends to follow it up by encouraging her pupils to write about the feelings of a young servant starting work in a country house.

There is no fixed age limit for the visit and disability is no bar either: Speke Hall will soon be welcoming its first group of physically handicapped children. "We'll do as much as possible of the same activities," says Chris Ryan. "We don't say no to anyone, they have to do it."

Jo Newson



# Review

## Etna on stage

Nancy Banks-Smith on the wonderful worlds of "Sensation" Smith



Virginia Woolf: A Writer's Life. By Lyndall Gordon. Oxford University Press £12.95. 0 19 811723 X. Vita. By Victoria Glendinning. Penguin £3.95. 0 14 007161 X. The Letters of Vita Sackville-West to Virginia Woolf. Edited by Louise De Salvo and Mitchell Leaska. Hutchinson £12.95. 0 09 158550 3.

Looking for a word with which to describe *To the Lighthouse* Virginia Woolf found elegy as accurate as any for that exploration of the effect that past events have on the present. It is an appropriate one for the biographical study which Lyndall Gordon has published 12 years after the appearance of Quentin Bell's elegant, honest two-volume account of his aunt's life. Such has been the amount of documentary material, both published and unpublished, made available in the meanwhile that many might despair at the prospect of another brisk march from 1882 to 1941, for Professor Bell's perspective cannot be faulted. He modestly declined to give any extended account of his subject's works. "Even if I had the equipment for such a task I should not have the inclination." Others have since judged themselves fitter for the work, but their labours have so often resulted in books that are not only almost unreadable, but even absurd.

Lyndall Gordon pays due acknowledgement to Professor Bell and his wife, and her study requires a knowledge of that biography, for she cuts to and fro across Virginia Woolf's life in a way that brings out the themes and ideas in her fiction rather than providing another linear, anecdotal outline. Virginia Woolf's "modernism", sketched out in such essays as "Mr Bennett and Mrs Brown" and the less well-known "The Narrow Bridge of Art", has obscured her essential inspiration in the past. The value of Lyndall Gordon's study lies in the emphasis laid upon her Victorian roots. As did Noel Annan in his new edition of *Leslie Stephen*, Lyndall Gordon quotes from the unpublished 1907 reminiscences, which

## Gay Bloomsbury

By Christopher Hawtree



Vita



Virginia

are to be collected in a new edition of *Moments of Being* next summer. These provide a fascinating view of Virginia Woolf's attitude to her past as she began the long struggle with her first novel. At other times Lyndall Gordon has a tendency to dwell on draft versions and unpublished fragments simply because they have not been much used before. In the course of her central discussion of *The Waves*, for example, one is referred, in connection with a film-image, to a 1905 diary kept in Cornwall which records her encounter with a school of porpoises. An edition of the complete shorter fiction is due out in 1985.

Unlike a number of recent writers, Lyndall Gordon does not use Virginia Woolf's apparent feminism as a basis from which to attack her husband. (One reviewer went so far as to imply that he had murdered her.) The level-headed account of the marriage's early difficulties is of a piece with the rest of her judicious and stimulating work which, together with the widely spaced books by R. L. Chambers, A. D. Moody and Hermione Lee, will be one of the critical guides to

which readers need to return. With the publication of Harold Nicolson's diaries, *Portrait of a Marriage*, a biography of Lady Sackville, a two-volume biography of Harold Nicolson, a biography of Violet Trefusis, not to mention all of Virginia Woolf's posthumous works, one would have thought that a life of Vita Sackville-West would be superfluous. However, Victoria Glendinning's *Vita*, which is now available in Penguin after several reprintings in hardback, has all the interest that she brought to her earlier, equally familiar subjects of Edith Sitwell and Elizabeth Bowen. Try as one might, it is difficult to be much excited by any of Vita Sackville-West's books, although some, such as *Knole* and *The Sackvilles*, remain useful; her life was perhaps too absorbing to leave much time for developing the imagination. From it Victoria Glendinning has fashioned a narrative, by turns romantic, tragic and absurd, which is never bogged down by the voluminous material available to her.

When Leonard Woolf collected his wife's

as Smith astutely put it, Mrs Patrick Campbell. His sensation for that play was Etna in eruption. It is one of the few occasions when, notwithstanding Etna's best efforts, one's money is on the leading lady.

It was all illusion and is all quite lost. Sybil struggled for her life in a flood of mirrors and lights. Ben Hur and the oddly named Arrhus hung suspended in a canvas sea. Around their little, dangling legs, submarine stagehands kicked and thumped it into turbulence. Of Smith's Prospero-like art nothing remains but stiff photographs and critics' awed descriptions of "Vast, ingenious contrivances which are capable of advancing, retiring, revolving and turning themselves inside out".

This devoted but lofty biography by his grandson falls on Smith like a tombstone. It would have been truer to the spirit of that jolly and ingenious man to produce a Sensation Smith Slop-Up, Pop-Up Christmas Book, magical as his pantomimes, where on every page damsels would shriek in giant hands, lathered horses gallop on the spot and gallant sailors salute until their hats floated off.

"Did your grandfather ever marry the barmaid?" Barry Lupino asked. Eventually, eventually, Smith's own life was the oddest, little period piece played out on the great stage of his work. Milly was "No ordinary barmaid, nobody pinched her bottom" and sure enough here is Milly in evening dress with what seems to be a fishbone stuck perfectly upright in her hair. Smith had a talented rival for her affections who "Produced a tiny fiddle from his coat tails and played it to bring the house down." Smith also had a wife in Wandsworth. There were some pretty fraught scenes, I can tell you, when the family found out, particularly at those climactic occasions, funerals, weddings and Christmas.

His in-laws "As they accepted the potted meats, treated him with cold disdain". His daughter "Bit her lip behind her wedding veil". Frigorous cousins turned up at Christmas: "Wayward Arthur" who downed two bottles of Scotch and set the house on fire and the improbable Vogler Walbanck "Who obviously hated children". If Milan was anything like this it is no wonder Prospero didn't go home.

Personally I will hear no word against a man who built "A mechanical effect" for Romeo and Juliet, which whizzed William Terriss into Mary Anderson's bedroom and out again like a revolving door. At 87 he said there was no bloody future in growing old and died, his landlady said, laughing loudly.

letters in the 1950s for a selected edition, Vita Sackville-West was unwilling for only some of those to herself to be included, for it was "the continuity that makes them more interesting, or so it seems to me"; in any case, the plan fell through, and she thought it a pity as the letters "are so gay and human and would surely undo any false conception of the grimness of Bloomsbury". She did not envisage the shift in attitudes, both literary and social, that has made it more than feasible to issue a six-volume edition of Virginia Woolf's letters, which gave sufficient continuity for some to scorn the accumulation of gay and human details. That a correspondence gains from the printing of both sides is a tempting theory, but is belied by this 470-page volume of Vita Sackville-West's letters. One's admiration for Victoria Glendinning's skill and patience rapidly increases. "How I watched you! How I felt - now what was it like? Well, somewhere I have seen a little ball kept bubbling up and down on the spray of a fountain; the fountain is you; the ball me. It is a sensation I get only from you. It is physically stimulating, restful at the same time." Time and again, and especially in the 1920s, Virginia Woolf was inspired by her to such flights of imagery, and it is depressing to reflect that she should be very glad if I could write letters like Byron's" confessed Vita Sackville-West in 1929; as it was, whatever the colourful place in which she found herself and however great her passions, she was only able to write the sort of letter whose images and fancies remain flat on the page. In his introduction Mitchell Leaska somewhat fancifully parallels two passages, from *Orlando* and *Between the Acts*, which dwell on "life, life, life" and remarks that these would translate into Latin as "Vita, Vita, Vita". This volume makes it clear that her effect was more intangible than any words could convey. Perhaps this volume will deter similar ones in the future, such as that devoted to Ethel Smyth which was mooted a few years ago, but one awaits with impatience the edition of Virginia Stephen's journals on which Mitchell Leaska and Louise DeSalvo are now engaged.

## Examining a myth

Patrick Carnegie on a new production of *Don Giovanni*

The Welsh National Opera's *Don Giovanni* is the kind of show which people flock to see it, as they certainly did when it came to London's Dominion Theatre recently. For the right kind of bad review suggests that it's the critic who's at fault and out of his depth, and that therefore this is an experience to be had at first hand.

Ruth Berghaus is an East German producer of Brechtian lineage whose work is well known on the Continent. Her *Don Giovanni* for the WNO is an interpretation as Peter Brook's *Don Giovanni* for the WNO. Whether it's as successful as the two Brook productions cannot yet be clear, but it is a copybook example of a vision that has first to teach its audience how to share it.

Often baffled at the performance, it was a woman who afterwards provided the clue to the mysteries, shaming my masculine incomprehension. The point, all too obviously enough, is that this is one of these rare occasions when *Don Giovanni*, pre-eminent work of male sexual power, has been produced by a woman, one of its potential victims. Yet the myth - for the entire second act charts the progress of the hero as he re-establishes himself when his fire departs - as an examination of it from the perspective of the women it touches. It deals with their wounds and the fantasies of the perpetrator.

The male view of *Don Giovanni* is too easily that of smug identification. Ruth Berghaus' production is a shocking reminder - at least to a male - that if the story isn't to become a bore it needs an occasional retelling by someone on the other side of the sex

war. In the very first scene the Don (William Shimell) is pursued across what looks like an ecclesiastical battlefield by a Donna Anna (Anne Evans) eager not for vengeance but for the completion of unfinished amorous business. The Commendatore's duel with the Don is a sham, for the Commendatore (John Tranter) dies not, significantly enough, by a thrust from his adversary but from a self-inflicted wound, presumably the act of a father unable to accept that his daughter is dallying with the Don.

When Elvira (Elaine Woods) enters she carries in one hand a whip to chastise her missing husband, and in the other a basket from which she produces a picnic in a vain bid to domesticate him. In the second act she gathers her dress into a swaddling bundle to lament (in "Mi tradi", superbly sung) the child she has never had. A great deal of play with foot-hold. A great deal of play with foot-hold.

The changing of socks, suddenly becomes purposeful when the Don successfully tempts Zerlina (Beverly Mills) with a high-heeled red shoe - but only one. Try as he may, the Don cannot persuade her to put the other one on, for she remains, quite literally, with one foot caught in her peasant clog and the other in a satin shoe quite out of her class - the painfully awkward gag declaring her inability to decide whether it is to Masetto or to the Don that she wishes to belong.

*Don Giovanni* himself is both the soul of the party and its conscience. "I (Finch) had del vino" came across not as a show of high spirits but as a sinister threat. He is irresistible, but also rather repulsive. When Leporello exchanges clothes with his master, their animality is emphasized by each sniffing the other's garments suspiciously before putting them on. The catalogue aria, finely sung by Nicholas Folwell, is a washing line of underwear abandoned by the Don's victims and retrieved by Leporello from the fissures in the barren landscape of ice floes or dried mud which is the predominant setting. Don Ottavio, presented as Man of the Future - a parody hero in a silver pseudo-space-suit, is the only character really at home here. For "Dalla sua pace" he is St Sebastian, pierced and paralysed by the arrows of desire. As he begins "Il mio tesoro" - most beautifully sung by Lawrence Dale - snowflakes start to fall, symbolizing the cold that envelops the world as the Don withdraws from it. For him Hell holds no terror, only the promise of forbidden adventures to come: the Commendatore can barely restrain him from rushing its gates.

In the pit Sir Charles Mackerras secured a wonderfully supportive reading of the score, feminine in its elegance and sensuality, masculine in its attack and tempi, the vigour of the forte piano continuo, and the aggressive timbre of the timpani. Even someone who hated the musical performance, and in the fact that Miss Berghaus treated the arias as sacred music still points, crystallizing the action into pure song. Strange and dramatic as the production tended to happen in-between times, but excitement and interest were rarely lacking. As experimental productions go, this one must be counted a major event, with the very great merit of making a work that has become too familiar seem rich, strange, and uncomfortable all over again.

## Raspberries at respectability

David Self talks to Derek Carpenter, whose clown show can be seen at the forthcoming Ten Day Wonder Family Festival

The Ten Day Wonder Family Festival. December 27 to January 5. Purcell Room 2.30pm. Free Playshops at 11am in the Queen Elizabeth foyer.

"Nursery rudeness" thundered the drama critic of a famous national paper. Although he admits to being upset by such a dismissal (because he felt the critic was not seeing the show through a child's eyes), Derek Carpenter accepts that a few adults may again be offended by his *Clown Show* when he presents it at the forthcoming Festival in the Purcell Rooms. Even so, he does not regret following the distinctly unusual career advice that he was once given: "You ought to get into vulgarity."

Derek Carpenter's acting career started when he was 13 and at school in Birmingham. He was given a small part in a television play. Other, more important, including *Crossroads*. With difficulty he remembers he was Glyn Meredith. He also played in various repertory theatres in the Midlands, fell in love with acting and realized that he liked the theatre best. "In television, you rehearse for two or three weeks and then you do it only once." He is, however, something of a "non-joiner". Although he has acted with major companies, he claims to be afraid of being swallowed up by a large group

and now most often works on his own. (It is perhaps the same claustrophobic and sentimental mixture. He has rejected a traditional story but says it will offer all you expect from pantomime, except the sets. "It's for people who want to cry when the hen can't lay an egg.")

His personal life? The Clown came about almost by chance. He was presenting a Punch and Judy show and needed a character to stand outside the booth to introduce the show. Out of necessity evolved Bo, the bold deceiver. Even as a clown, Derek is an individualist. Bo's make-up is in part green, which has resulted in his being barred from a circus where it is an unlucky, taboo colour.

The *Clown Show* is improvised, involving puppet, uni-cycles, stilts and Punch and Judy. It's popular; his audience comes back for more and he's been courted by television. *Play School* wanted him to appear but without his clown's make-up. "Children are afraid of make-up." "No," came his answer. "Children aren't. Adults are." He is equally robust about his Punch and Judy show, because that anyone should want to ban a show that anyone should want to ban on the grounds that it is sexist or violent entertainment. For him it is simply an old-fashioned morality play. This year, and as part of the Festival, he is also directing and appearing in *Pantomime*. A reaction against traditional theatrical practice where, at the end of the year, much effort is put into

a show with an innocuous storyline, this promises to be a strange, coarse and sentimental mixture. He has rejected a traditional story but says it will offer all you expect from pantomime, except the sets. "It's for people who want to cry when the hen can't lay an egg."

In it, he plays dame, a sort of Max Wall in drag, and two other actors are Idle Jack and Mr Bonnet ("a man of many parts"). The fourth character is a 16-foot high rabbit, who strides through the action like a malevolent divinity. To the cliché of a question, "Does it have a moral?" he replies that he likes clichés but refuses to give away much of the plot. He does however reveal that the message of the final song is "Find yourself."

Although his Marxist inclinations mean that he is "against kings and queens and so on", he also knows that "metaphysically, we need them". He also feels most strongly that for many children "toilet humour" comes as a sort of splendid release; they need the chance to blow the occasional raspberry with respectability. Not surprisingly, he is a popular entertainer. Asked if, working on his own and acting as his own agent, he is as busy as he wants to be, he gives a contented smile and then a happy nod.

A sharper tone is to be found in the prose passages, where Chesterton takes a dim view of magazine editors who bring out their Christmas numbers so early that the reader "is more likely to be still lamenting for the turkey of last year than to have seriously settled down to a solid anticipation of the turkey which is to be eaten on Christmas Eve." As well as about Peter Pan, Santa Claus and, especially, Dickens, Chesterton dislikes being told that, in keeping Christmas, he is perpetuating a pagan festival. For him, the significance of Christmas lies in the enduring reality of an individual supremely comfortable in a world that is more comfortable when dealing with abstractions.

Among the verse, the editor has included a lightweight piece "The Turkey and the Turk" subtitled "The Mummer's Play". Here we meet a cast of characters including St George, Father Christmas, and the Turkish Knight; and can ponder such maxims as: "Progress is change; so is the whole world's youth. About betimes to catch the newest truth."

Josephine Falk

## High fantasies

Two Can Play. By Trevor Rhone. Tricycle Theatre.

The Pope's Wedding. By Edward Bond. Royal Court Theatre.

Jungle Book. Kipling, adapted by John Harbach. Adolph Theatre.

The Wiz. By William F Brown/Challe Smalls. Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith.

The Secret Diary Of Adrian Mole. By Sue Townsend. Wyndhams Theatre.

Mohicans. By Garry Lyons. Donmar Workshop Theatre.

Coriolanus. National (Olivier) Theatre.

Fantasy, sex and violence are the themes of the week. *Two Can Play* explores them all, inviting laughter. Jim and Gloria's grown up children have established themselves as illegal immigrants in the US, now Gloria must do likewise to facilitate Jim's escape from their war-torn Caribbean island home. Gloria gets to Harlem to be disillusioned of the American Dream. Returning home, she effects overdue changes in their married life, with some gloriously comic set pieces - Jim's account of Pop's funeral; Gloria's description of arriving in America - it relies heavily on its two players, Mona Hammond, one of the best actresses in Britain, ensures its success. Rudolph Walker is her excellent partner.

*The Pope's Wedding* is deeply rooted in the lives of real Essex people truly observed and reported. Lovingly directed (Max Stafford-Clark) and beautifully acted by a young cast, well designed (Peter Harcourt) and with brilliant soundplot (Andy Pink) and lighting (Andy Phillips), Bond's flawed play is by turns engrossing, tedious, believable, unbelievable. The violence latent in boredom, the pent up sexuality of youth are wonderfully captured. Things go wrong in trying to establish the reasons for Byo's hermit existence and, moreover, why Scoop should murder him to become his rival. It is no "classic" (as claimed) but a good attempt to treat seriously the plight of the questioning individual in a community which asks no questions.

The question prompted by John Harcourt's stage adaptation of the *Jungle Book* is "Who is it meant for?" Kipling addicts can rely on their own imaginations to flesh out the characters. Children will want more than barebones recital by a multi-voiced chorus singing of animal behaviour to capture interest and stimulate fantasy. Furiat Harcourt and his

helpers mean well but keeping relentlessly to the words they lose the magic. Magic has been lost in *The Wiz*, the all-black musical version of *The Wizard of Oz*. Brown's disjointed book assumes audience familiarity with the classic Garland film, a weakness since it points the poverty of Smalls' musicality by comparison. Munchausen. The Yellow Brick Road. Oz are never really established. The show's success lies in its wonderful design and lighting effects, and the multifaceted talents of the performers. Best of these is Scarecrow - Clarke Peters, a dazzling actor, singing acrobatic mime. He and the rest sing, dance, act with joyous energy, captivating entirely, silencing doubts.

No doubts about the successful West End transfer of *Adrian Mole* from Leicester. Directed at a licking pace (Graham Watkins) in a comic-cut setting (Anthony Dean), it details the sexual stirrings of adolescence, middle and old age of a number of ordinary people observed by an "intellectual" aged 13½. Shrewdly humorous digs at the way we live, and spot on characterizations - especially Mandy Travis (Mole mum); Sheila Collins (Mole grandma) - add to the genial good humour which erupts in loud laughter. Simon Schusterberger makes a pathetically lovable Adrian. Anthony Flores dreads cheering playing numerous roles - all to perfection.

The imperfections of *Mohicans* lie largely in the writing, since the acting is good. Cubby Fox and Sniffer are brothers, violent Mohican punks, both on supplementary benefit with their Vallum-dependent Mother. Shopping leads to accidental murder which leads to a police shoot-out and to the "happy hunting ground" of Redskin mythology. Sub-Hawatha verses spoken to drum beats punctuate scenes. There is some fairly blatant information-writing about punk col-fours, glie sniffing, Britain's youth culture, and the transitions from Leeds reality to redskin fantasy are badly managed. Nevertheless, *Mohicans*, played without interval, is never boring.

Peter Hall's production of *Coriolanus* is overwhelming; magnificent in artistry, glorious in conception and execution. In a truly splendid company - no weakness anywhere - Ian McKellen (Coriolanus) and Irene Worth (Volumnia) are colossal. His brazen pride, cold condescension, dismissive disdain matches her joyful triumph, imperious anger, proud prostitution. His whispered "Oli, mother, mother, what have you done?" presages the collapse of his and her world and goes down. A triumph for director, designer (John Bury), composer (Harrison Birtwistle), for the actors and for our National Theatre.

John James

## Two dames

Jack and the Beanstalk and the Wild. Wild West. Young Vic. Red Riding Hood. Theatre Royal, Stratford East.

The panto season is back in London (Oh yes it is) although Jack Smith of Beanstalk fame has unaccountably emigrated to Kansas for the Young Vic production. Not that it matters too much, the story survives the journey intact. Unfortunately, the Young Vic show's had too much luck with this production. The Beanstalk caught fire in rehearsal and the giant broke his wrist during the press show. His place was taken by Roger Watkins, the director, who is an altogether smaller man. As befits a panto story, everything turned out well in the end.

The show is action-packed, looks terrific (although the theatre's open stage makes for some cumbersome scene changes) and the performances are splendid, particularly Gareth Kirkland's engagingly immature Jack and Andrew Secombe's invisible Mexican bandito, who shouts "Caramba!" at the drop of a sombrero. While we're on the subject, sit down off to the Diamond Horseshoe Band for its authentically syrupy country and western

music. Playwright David Holman seems a little inexperienced in the peculiar art of panto writing - for example, his dame (Reg Stewart) suffers from a chronic shortage of one-liners - but the energy and warmth of the playing, both by actors and musicians, makes it finger-pickin' good.

Merry England is the setting for David Cregan and Brian Protheroe's *Red Riding Hood*, the sort of Merry England you see on BBC comedy shows where everyone is either in tweeds or smocks and the local bank manager has a mental age of about 11. In fact, it's an ideally soppy setting for the entrance of a vain rogue of a wolf (Michael Benterben) to upset. You get the feeling that Angela Carter would definitely approve.

Colin Bennett makes an excellent dame in the tradition that David Cregan has developed over three pantos at Stratford East. His dame is upright, genteel and only very slightly camp. The idea behind *Red Riding Hood* (played by Kate Hardie in her stage debut) is also clever. For the first hour of the play she's a rather bossy tomboy who can't wait for a confrontation with the wolf (Angela Carter again?) but after Gruffy gives her a lovely dress and the near fatal red cloak, she goes all gooeey and feminine and is more interested in dancing round the maypole.

Nick Baker

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## BOOKS

## Voyage round the Middle Ages

England and Its Rulers, 1066-1272. By M. T. Clanchy. Fontana History of England £3.50. 0 00 635158 1. Medieval Monasticism. By C. H. Lawrence. Longman £5.95. 582 49185 1. War in the Middle Ages. By Philippe Contamine. Translated by Michael Jones. Basil Blackwell £17.50. 631 13142 6. The Penguin Guide to Medieval Europe. By Richard Barber. Penguin £6.95. 14 046 633 9.

When we cross the Channel on holiday, too often we take our language with us in the bland confidence that Anglo-American will open up for us the European civilised world. The technology which overcomes so many barriers makes it easier to live without other languages. But readers of these four excellent books on the medieval period will enter a world where the sea was a more formidable barrier than speech to those who travelled. Nobody then took a ship merely for a holiday. Yet there was constant intermingling of clerks, pilgrims, merchants, rulers, retainers and soldiers. Even if England was not "conquered" after 1066, her royal family and nobility usually spoke English as a second language for another three centuries. This political dominance of families, who were often actually thought to be alien, is a leading theme of Michael Clanchy's racy and scholarly history of England and her rulers from the Norman Conquest till the death of Edward I.

It is quite a difficult period for a newcomer. However easily we may

grasp the grim Norman presence from the Bayeux Tapestry, with its trail of severed limbs and running men, we have at once to learn how a realm so brutally subjugated went on almost without pause to be strongly and skilfully governed. The Anglo-Saxon inheritance was basic. Villagers and townsmen continued to experience an age-old routine of local assemblies, justice and the Christian year. Yet the realm was ruled from the top by a succession of foreign families, mostly from parts of what we now call France, succeeding each other as king followed king, but always as aliens angling their predecessors. Astonishing skills in administration were displayed by a series of bright young Ranulfs, Rogers and Peters, familiars of the king's household but born the other side of the Channel. In fact, Clanchy divides the English history of this time into the three periods of Normans, Angevins and Plantagenets. There is a hint of continuity here, in comparing what were not strictly similar groupings, but the general intention and effects are very good. Dr Clanchy explains the emergence of a sturdy, virtually "national" monarchy out of Gallic tutelage more clearly than previous scholars. It is rare for a textbook to be such compulsive reading.

Medieval writers sometimes simplified their world into those who fought, those who prayed and those who laboured. But monks were clearly and above all men who lived for organized prayer. The world believed that this was valuable not just for the monks themselves but for their benefactors and also for those for whom they prayed. This is why kings and nobles poured so much wealth into the creation of abbeys, and the abbeys were

able to stay rich till the world cried enough. Hugh Lawrence has written a lucidly organized and scholarly book to show how the religious life developed in western Christendom from the earliest monks of the desert to the friars—not monks at all—who aimed to christianize a world of towns and universities. This is a very careful book, neither starry-eyed nor cynical. Lawrence communicates a deep admiration for the order and beauty of Cluniac monasticism, though he does not venture very far in explaining how under the bad abbot Pons the steady routine could change so suddenly into violent rebellion. There is a huge literature on monasticism, but to my knowledge no short, first-class, up-to-date survey like this one.

Philippe Contamine's magisterial study of war in the Middle Ages has been well translated by Michael Jones. But it remains a work characteristically French in idiom. War is taken as an independent concept with the declared aim of showing how it affected and was influenced by the human environment. The intention seems to be to arrive at abstract, generalized truths, above merely particular treatments of warfare. The book is divided into three parts: General Characteristics; Themes and Perspectives; and a huge, systematic Bibliography. In fact, the chapters which make up the body of the book are rather like sacks into which innumerable precise details, lists and statistics have been poured. The effect is of a series of learned lecture-notes on "Artilery", "Towards a history of courage", and so on. As a whole the book does not present a unitary thesis but a treasure-house of learning. That being so, it is a pity that a polyglot and even *recherché* bib-

liography should omit Maurice Keen's notable *Laws of War in the Middle Ages*.

Of these four books, Richard Barber's *Penguin Guide to Medieval Europe* is the only one actually written to be taken on our cross-Channel holiday. Reading it at home will be just as much fun. But it is a little hard to be sure exactly who the expected readers are. Tourists who want quite a lot of medieval history will be well served, but they must be prepared to visit just the places Richard Barber likes best, because his guide is not comprehensive, and to accept his history as wholly true, because he gives neither notes nor hints on further reading. It is not fair to quibble, for the book is full of good matter and well written. It is divided into four sections: Christendom (an account of cathedrals, churches and religious orders); Empires and Nations (the kingdoms of the world as seen from the mountain top); Lords, Princes and Vassals (on castles, town and villages); and the World of Learning (schools, universities, law and medicine).

Some will be grateful for the detail of the architectural descriptions, others for the stimulating history explanations: why pilgrimages were made to particular places, why the castles of Britain are different from those of Germany, and so on. My own preference was for the delightful survey of medieval towns: from Regensburg to Carcassonne, Lübeck to Florence, and many more. It is in the variety and wholeness of towns we may go back most convincingly to meet the middle ages.

F R H Du Boulay

## The path of Empire

The British Empire 1558-1983. By T. O. Lloyd. Clarendon Press Oxford £19.50. 0 19 873024 1.

Four centuries ago, as Professor Lloyd points out, men and women who we might otherwise think to be models of compassion, took human slavery for granted: four centuries hence, should it survive that long, the human race may look back upon our near-eating (and it is not a vegetarian who writes this) with a frisson of disgust. Thus, he sagely concludes, "moral revulsion is not the best way to understand the path of empire".

The studiously non-judgmental stance of his book is one of its major attributes. This large degree of detachment, plus the broad learning that informs and fuels every section, the lightness with which that learning is worn and condensed, and the shaping skill that brings clear articulation and proportion to every chapter, will make the book an outstandingly useful acquisition to a host of history departments.

"Imperialism", as applied to any contemporary political initiative, whichever side of the curtain, cannot be other than pejorative. Professor Lloyd finds it so tarnished and defaced a verbal coin, and one now so imprecise in its meaning that he eschews it altogether, preferring to specify in more particular terms whether it is imperial enthusiasm, imperial expansion, closer imperial unity politically or closer integration economically that is being discussed.

One is struck again, trivially maybe but forcefully, by how arbitrary and contingent the whole process of empire-building was from start to finish. The old crack that Britain accrued her possessions in a fit of absence of mind still seems partly true. The suspicion that overseas territories would cost more to settle, defend and maintain than one could ever extract out of them economically was early to arise and was never to be wholly quelled.

Time and again, one is impressed by the slightness of the moves and the insignificance of the sums needed to secure enormous expanses of land that were, only a few years later, to be regarded as economically vital and strategically essential. Yes, even these niggardly expenditures were dubbed prodigious by anti-imperialist retrainers. There never was a single epoch when the British mood could be said to be unequivocally imperialist. Even the Nineties, usually thought of as the heyday of imperialism, were shot through with the doubts and misgivings so unforgettably expressed in Kipling's "Recessional".

Young students of this book, whether they read it continuously or refer to it for particular areas or topics, will be the first generation to view the British Empire as a closed historical enterprise (well, yes—there's still [until 1971] Hong Kong, Gibraltar, and, of course, the Falklands—Professor Lloyd, with a fine sense of its long-term importance, gives the 1982 War fully five lines) begun, roughly, at the start of the reign of the First, and ended, to all intents and purposes, in the middle of the reign of the Second Elizabeth.

When I remember my own school-days, with our masters complacently assuring us that those bright red atlas expanses would, if anything, grow wider yet (the Empire reached its apogee about 1920, with the temporary earnings of the First War) and when I recall Churchill's wartime avowal "I have not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire" I begin to feel very, very old. "Great Britain has lost an Empire and not yet found a role", remarked the on-the-whole friendly Dan Acheson—and she still seems to be looking.

Martin Fagg

## In search of the truth

Under the Tropic. By Tom Hopkinson. Hutchinson £9.95. 0 09 156190 6.

Hard as it is to believe nowadays, there was once a time when the interesting and controversial characters in journalism were the journalists, and not the proprietors.

As we witness today the *Daily Mirror*—and it is by no means alone—lurching precariously from one political position to another, relying ever increasingly on gimmicks and transparent efforts to make news, it is particularly instructive to read Tom Hopkinson's autobiography.

Hopkinson, former editor of *Picture Post* in Britain, the magazine *Drum* in South Africa, and founder of the first South African course in journalism postgraduate studies at a British university, was an overtly political figure. Indeed, despite reading both volumes of his autobiography and knowing him for a year when I studied under him, I still have no clear idea where his political sympathies lie. His career was shaped by an intense dislike of prejudice, hypocrisy and pomposity, a distrust of the establishment and a search for the truth—often at considerable risk to his own safety.

The first volume of his autobiography, *Of This Our Time* (Hutchinson 1982), gave a memorable account of *Picture Post*'s life and death and an evocative picture of life in London during the war. The second and final volume, *Under the Tropic*, describes the difficulties of editing an investigative picture magazine in South Africa in the most troubled days of apartheid, when rescuing one's staff from the clutches of the police or finding them



March 1947 - "A Symbol of British Industry Today? Steam-roller on a Coal-Site after one of Winter's Many Snowstorms". One of the illustrations from *Picture Post* 1938-50, edited and with a new foreword by Tom Hopkinson (Chatto & Windus £8.95). Lacking commentary and numerous reproductions of original double-page spreads combine in a fascinating piece of social history.

drunk in illegal black drinking clubs, were near to everyday occurrences. One picture, of the *Drum* office beaten up by the Johannesburg police, was reproduced by the *Daily Mirror* under the caption "The face that shook the world", awakening many people here to what constituted daily life in South Africa.

But the most forceful part of the book is the account of the Sharpeville massacre of innocent black South Africans by the police. Hopkinson had the judgment, and a little luck, to have the only reporter and photographer on the spot, only to suffer the agony of the government refusing him permission to print a word or a picture for six months. The evidence on the *Drum* staff at the Sharpeville inquiry was subsequently crucial in discrediting the government's story.

Hopkinson was also present during the last days of the struggle for inde-

David Lister

## The bright lights

The Night Side of London. By Robert Macbray. Illustrations by Tom Browne. Paul Harris Publishing, Edinburgh £7.95. 0 86228 082 6.

If you smile to be told that Piccadilly gets its name from the Place of Peccadilloes, you will enjoy this tour of London's nightlife as it appeared in 1902 to Robert Macbray and his illustrator, Tom Browne. Your guide is a decent fellow, and his occasional allusions to the risqué, the impoverished, or the squalid will not disturb your sense of good clean fun. So that when, for example, the Fair in Frail Flesh is drawn to your attention, you will not be aware that there is any real vice attached to it. Whether your taste is for a Stalling Hop at the Holborn Town Hall, or a Masked Ball at Covent Garden (admission one guinea), you will find something to divert you in Macbray's descriptive vignettes.

Some things will surprise you: the pubs don't close until after midnight; police raids have killed off all but one Night Club (and that a model of

decorum); while Suburbia is well-provided with local theatres, and is getting out of the habit of frequenting the West End. But some things have a familiar ring. Macbray notes that nearly all the restaurants in London are in the hands of foreigners; that the city is subject to an "Amurrican" invasion each spring; and that although an all-night sitting of Parliament is one of the sights you may wish to see, "you will find it much better fun to be in bed".

Tom Browne's illustrations are a delight; amusing and touching by turns, his drawings make their own social comment with economy and precision. Let us hope that the publishers, who will not be hoodwinked by the anti-discrimination industry in protest against one particular sketch. It depicts two willow "ladies of the pavement" behind whom comes trotting a debonair Japanese gentleman. The caption reads: "A gay little Jap".

Josephine Falk

## A grander world

A Favourite of the Gods. By Sybille Bedford. Virago Modern Classics £3.50. 0 86068 387 7. A Compass Error. By Sybille Bedford. Virago Modern Classics £2.95. 0 86068 385 5.

The informative introductions to these two volumes (A *Compass Error*, the sequel of *A Favourite of the Gods*, but each complete in itself) do justice to a writer whose style and concepts are strongly individual and whose demands on the reader are such that a single reading can barely suffice for the appreciation of their complexities.

*A Favourite of the Gods* shows how intricate and actions are closely bound.

Katya Watter

## BOOKS

## Big Mac

War Stories: The Mediterranean 1943-1945. By Harold Macmillan. Macmillan £18.00. 0 333 37198 4.

The author's own phrase "Mediterranean merry-go-round" could hardly be bettered as a summing-up of this work, describing as it does almost two and a half years of constant travel, political negotiations, contacts with kings and the famous, and ever increasing responsibilities almost nonchalantly assumed.

In January 1943 Macmillan became Minister Resident at Allier Headquarters in North West Africa—based in Algiers, and from there began the series of letters to his wife which developed into the *Diaries*, here set out in a well produced book. His was the task of reconciling De Gaulle, "attractive and yet impossible", and General Giraud, "obscure", so that there could be set up the Comité Français de la Libération Nationale, and thanks to him, the much photographed handshake between them was more than an empty gesture. His success in Algiers was followed by the Allied invasion of Sicily and of the Italian mainland, and Macmillan found himself in Naples involved now

in long discussions on the Italian Armistice Terms, on the possible abdication of the Italian King, and as Head of the Italian Control Commission, on the problem of treating a defeated enemy as a subsequent collaborator. Again success was followed by more problems—in Athens near civil war and the setting up of the new government in Yugoslavia, yet calm diplomacy prevailed, and Macmillan left the Mediterranean theatre in May 1945 a much praised and powerful figure.

Much of the fascination of the *Diaries* lies in the revelation of the other Macmillan—the family man, the omnivorous reader and the keen observer, whether of Victory Parades, historical sites, natural beauty or battle, uncomfortably near, but most of all his fellow men, many of whom he dismissed as "bores". Not, however, Churchill (kind and considerate throughout), Eden (understanding and appreciative), Generals Alexander and Eisenhower, whom he much admired, nor the Pope, with whom he had two audiences, nor his invaluable Private Secretary, John Wyndham. Despite the lapse of time, there is an immediacy about this book, only to be dispelled by the sad realization that so many of those mentioned in it are now dead.

Eric Church

## The greatest?

Was Rab Butler really the greatest Prime Minister we never had? Judging by the account of him in Sir Nicholas Henderson's *The Private Office* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson £9.95), the answer must be an emphatic No. Sir Nicholas, who worked as Rab's Principal Private Secretary in the Foreign Office from October 1963 until the General Election of 1964, depicts him as clever, certainly, but unable to

make up his mind about anything. Even deciding whether or not to go to a diplomatic cocktail party could, it seems, cause endless debate.

The hero of this elegant and enjoyable book about "foreign secretaries I have known" is undoubtedly Ernest Bevin. It would be worth buying for the funny and touching portrait of him alone, but it also succeeds, in only 127 pages, to give a clear and valuable picture of the foreign policy that is contained in many a weightier tome.

Biddy Passmore

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METHUEN

11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

## Sky-fi

Early Man and the Cosmos. By Evan Hadzinge. Heinemann £14.95. 434 31108 1.

In his well researched and superbly illustrated book, Evan Hadzinge re-examines recent thinking on Stonehenge and other megalithic structures used, or thought to have been used, as astronomical observatories. He also investigates the beliefs of "skywatchers" elsewhere, from the Babylonians and Egyptians with their influence on our own culture, to those of the past and present inhabitants of Central America and South West USA.

Why the juxtaposition of these quite different cultures? Mr Hadzinge's theme is that our modern insistence on scientific accuracy and knowledge for its own sake have left us very little comprehension of societies with no need for such pedantry. These societies, interested as they were, and are, by astronomical events developed "skywatching" obsessions as deep as our own but with different motives—largely those of religion and ritual.

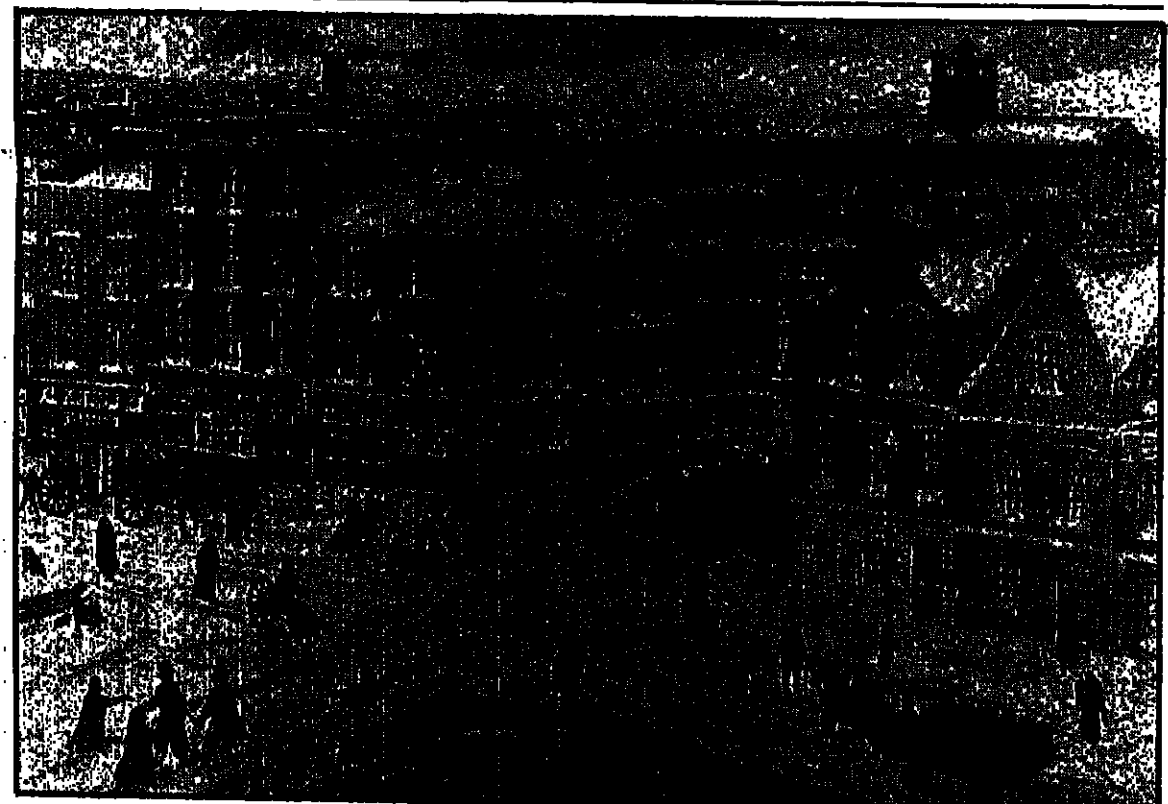
The author's studies of the Maya and South West Indian cultures are fascinating and detailed, and demonstrate how unimaginative and arid much recent thinking about European prehistoric societies has been. *Early Man and the Cosmos* will be of great interest to those who are stirred by the mysterious ruins of neolithic and bronze-age Britain and Europe, both archaeologists and laymen.

C C Crewdson

## Read on

The Practice of History. By G. R. Elton (Penguin, £2.50. 0 00 654068 6). "I know that what I have to say may at times appear offensive"—could any prefatory words be more calculated to make one read on? This monograph, by the celebrated Tudor historian, first appeared in 1967, and by the severity of its strictures on what Professor Elton deemed erroneous in the historical attitude and method, flattered not a few academic doves. It reads quite as forcefully and persuasively now.

M. F.



One of Stephen Conlin's detailed drawings in Dublin: One Thousand Years of Wood Quay, by himself and Jonathan Bardon (Blackstaff Press £10.00). In this unusual book, the same patch of Dublin is drawn and described at 15 key dates during the past 1,000 years; recent archaeological excavations have provided the essential information.

## Frustrated optimists

Terrorists and Social Democrats. The Russian Revolutionary Movement under Alexander III. By Norman M. Naimark. Harvard University Press. £21.25. 0 674 87464 1. A History of Russia. By Nicholas V. Riasanovsky. (Fourth edition) Oxford University Press £19.50. 0 19 503361 2.

Some idealistic young people felt it their duty to blow up the Tsar. Liberator in 1881. Over subsequent decades their successors bloodily died to death many loyal officials and ministers. Their motives were noble and their logic muddled, but their stubborn persistence convinced the world that theirs was a righteous struggle against oppression.

This guidebook to the talkative, frustrated optimists of revolutionary Russia makes excellent use of Naimark's archives. Alexander's police and ministers were astonishingly successful, yet they transformed rather than destroyed the movement. Professor Naimark wonders at "the ability of Russia to produce desperate young men and women who continued, with frightening regularity, to hurl themselves against the brick wall of autocracy," yet shows how the humane attitudes of officialdom may be in part responsible. If you arrest 5831 troublemakers over thirteen years, it seems unwise to let off 5482 of them with little more than a caution. The changes of these underground years were significant for the revolutionary movement. Imported Marxism ranged with native Russian revolu-

tion, in a blurred confusion that would have infuriated Lenin. Activist groups of St Petersburg moulded Russian social democracy more effectively than its official father-figure, the exiled Plekhanov. All these developments are explained against a lively backdrop of tales from the archives of argument and assassination, plots, strikes, bank robberies, betrayals and disasters. Nicholas Riasanovsky can offer few *History of Russia* has reached a difficultly updated fourth edition, demonstrates its solid reliability. The tone of Soviet didacticism permeates the writing. It is a treatise that reduces Russia's colourful array of rulers to cardboard, and their economic and cultural background to conscientious lists of developments.

Tom Corfe



## BOOKS

## Turned upside down

**Elusive Settlement.** By Barry Williams. Nelson £4.95. 0 17 445157 1  
**The Glorious Revolution.** By John Miller. Longman £2.00. 0 582 35366 1  
**The Revolution of 1688 in England.** By J. R. Jones. Weidenfeld and Nicholson £12.95 297 994670 and £5.95 99569 3.

Seventeenth century England being a popular period at A level, it's fortunate that its major historians have published their research with the clarity to make it accessible to school students. But there's also room for books with more introduction to the period and guidance through its complexities. *Elusive Settlement: England's Revolutionary Years 1637-1701*, in Nelson's new Advanced Studies in History series, does all this and more, incorporating extensive extracts from primary sources, commenting on the ideas in secondary ones, and suggesting study exercises and methods of consolidation. There's an evaluative bibliography too, saying which bits of which books are most worth reading. What it amounts to is a complete study guide rather than a textbook, and a good study guide at that, not just for the A level student but for the A level teacher. The collation of all this information is just what takes the time in the preparation of an A level syllabus; the form of presentation and the suggestions for further work just what

the tired brain may be searching for the night before your A level double period.

So why do I feel slightly cheated by this book? Is it because after teaching seventeenth century England for more than a decade, I've done the collating already? Is it because some of the study exercises could have been (of course they weren't) lifted from my own repertoire? ("Write a brief assessment of Pym's 17 April speech"; "Draw up a month by month chronology of the Long Parliament"; "Recap on what you have understood by the word settlement in the Interregnum"). Why should I be anything less than grateful for all this help? Perhaps the idea of giving this book to A level students carries a hint of substance for the popular theory that there's a book which "she" gets it all from. It's not that I want to perpetuate mystique, just not to devalue the teacher's role. Perhaps the answer is to select judiciously from the book while emphasizing the importance of following its leads to other sources, particularly the primary ones which for this period are easily available. Because spoon-feeding can be just as bad for the teacher as the taught; we're all learning together, and sometimes need to be able to sink or swim on our own. So thank you, Nelson and Mr Williams, but with a certain reservation.

From a new series to a well-established one; *The Glorious Revolution* is one of the latest of Longman's Seminar

Studies in History series, whose combination of text, documents and bibliography needs no introduction. John Miller presents a clear analysis of the road to 1688 and the lasting consequences of revolution—the entrenchment in the constitution of a kind of liberty, but even more of property; the establishment of a government which could at last raise money and wage war without being hamstrung by the taxpayers; the victory of pragmatism over enthusiasm; a kind of toleration.

Like J. R. Jones, whose *The Revolution of 1688 in England* is now in a second edition, John Miller emphasizes the importance of anti-popery, a force not much defined or understood but furiously felt, but he does not agree with Professor Jones' thesis that James II was systematically setting about establishing absolute monarchy in 1687-8, just as his subject thought he was. Either way, the Queen's pragmatism was crucial: it was as easy—easier to produce a spurious son as a genuine one and the King's fervour to reconquer his country did nothing to suggest he wouldn't do it.

Professor Jones' local detail on the attempt to fix the projected elections in 1688 was more than just a postscript to the events of 1640-60. But those intense and dramatic years of conviction shouldn't be discounted; the failure of his experiments was a vital prerequisite for the acceptance of 1689's expedients.

Jessica Saraga

## lingo

A recent review of a new guide to *Romany (Romanipen)* by David Allen of Kirkcaldy, Scotland, to send Lingo some reminiscences of Yorkshire Romany "collected during years of teaching in North Yorkshire town which had a history of connections with travellers".

Romany speakers, probably itinerant musicians and dancers, moved from central India to the Western Punjab no later than the third century BC and there they stayed till the ninth century AD. Then, for reasons that remain obscure, a wholesale migration north and west took place. Romany speakers were present in numbers in England and Scotland by the fifteenth century.

It is unlikely that the vocabulary of Romany ever more exceeded 5,000 words and borrow in 1874 puts upper limit in England at "probably not more than 1,400 words"; and he and other authorities bewail the extent to which both vocabulary and grammar had become corrupted by contact with English. In spite of the discovery in 1884 of a family clan in North Wales speaking a much purer form of Romany, the adulteration continued apace till the language has become more or less a version of English interlarded with Romany words.

Back to Mr Allen:

Where's tha gotten 'awd juckal frev, Bowt it frev a chava last Saterdag. Is't a cusht juckal, mush? Diz he nash on a bit?

Nay, he's radged – teal's altus down. Leeaks trashed it me, mush.

Aye, he is – frittened o' his own shadder.

What's th' bawer think on? Nut mitch. She 'in't over fond o' juckals, she knows.

Paid a fair bit of lower for him then, mush?

Aye. Twenty-fahve quid's worth. Bud Ah reckon Ah's gotten a jibber.

Mr Allen glosses the Yorkshire words thus: 'frittened', the old (used without regard to age); frev, from; teal, tall; jibber, shirker.

The Romany items are: *juckal* or *juckal*, a diminutive of *juck*, from *Romany juck*, a dog; *mush* a vocative from *Romany moosh*, man; *chava* and *bewer*, boy and girl, from *Romany chava* or *chavi* and *bewer* or *buer* (often paired as beau and sweetheart, though the Romany origin of the latter is unattested); *cusht*, of good quality, is street traders' slang, probably via *cusht* from *Romany kusht*, good; *nash* is *Romany nash* or *nash*, to run; *trashed* is *Romany trash* to frighten.

Mr Allen asks about two words. *Radged* in the general sense of "silly, worthless" is formed from *radge*, a variant of *Lower* English dialect *radgy*, mad. *Lower*, *lower*, *lower*, reward, money, was standard English till the sixteenth century (from Old French *lower*, reward) but later became a thieves' cant (though there may be two words confused, here).

William T McLeod

## Basic breakfast

**What You Always Wanted To Know About Home Computers But Never Dared Ask.** By Chris Maynard and Jacqui Bailey. By Chris Maynard and Jacqui Bailey. 0 330 28327 0.

Money cannot buy this handy little book: you have to get Kellogg's cornflakes and send for it. Chris Maynard and Jacqui Bailey have managed lucid explanation of all the main points that confuse beginners, within 64 pocket-size pages. Despite the nudge-nudge title, their text is mainly unparaphrasing and reliable, and the cartoons and illustrations effective. There is even a four-page glossary and a proper index.

Impoverished teachers will realize that there is no such thing as a free breakfast. Co-sponsors Kellogg's and Sinclair's influence on the book is perceptible. Hardly surprisingly, every

picture of a computer happens to show Spectrum. And who can complain that the cornflake lurking on pages 36 to 39 is perfectly Kellogg's? It is a perfectly valid size-comparison for a silicon chip.

Although the emphasis is on home micros, the authors are refreshingly sane about their limitations. "Performing simple tasks with a computer is... like waiting files with a hammer." They explain the principles on which they work simply and discuss what tasks they are suitable for, emphasizing the variety of software available. The process of setting up a Spectrum and loading and running software (cassettes, not Microdisks) is illustrated clearly. The main types of programming languages are covered and a 10-line program (in Spectrum BASIC, naturally) is developed, and the attempts, not always successful, to change them.

Larry Hartley

**Endangered Lives. Public Health in Victorian Britain.** By Anthony Wohl (Methuen £7.95) is a vivid and scholarly account of the diseases and appalling sanitary conditions in the last century, and the attempts, not always successful, to change them.

Peter Parker

## Novy mir

**Russia: A Modern History.** By David Warnes. University Tutorial Press £3.24. 7231 0868 8

Brezhnev (1976): "The struggle to consolidate the principles of peaceful coexistence... remains the main element of our policy towards the capitalist states."

Reagan (1981): "So far Détente's been a one way street which the Soviet Union has used to pursue its own aims."

Throughout this volume, David Warnes cleverly uses documentary evidence such as this to illustrate the two themes of conflict and of the importance of the individual in modern Russian history. Eye-witness accounts appear in every chapter and are carefully chosen to be at a reading level suitable for most secondary school pupils. The main text and narrative however is about as long-winded as a Frankie Howard joke and would send most pupils of less than good O level standard reaching for their "Pocket Oxford's" every few lines. A useful glossary at the end does little to rectify this.

The content is extremely thorough, concentrating mainly on political and international events, though dotted throughout with adequate reference to social history and how political events have had an effect on the ordinary Soviet citizen. This is especially the case in a well-written section, "Life in Stalin's Russia". As in nearly all school texts on Russia, however, the role of the Socialist Revolutionary Party is underplayed. They were the largest and most popular party before 1918 and yet receive no more than a few scant references in this volume.

Neither is much emphasis placed on Soviet technological advances since the war (eg the Space Race) nor on the regime's record on human rights and peace-keeping with achieving excellence in sport.

However, the book has many other redeeming features: The layout is superb, consisting of masses of clearly produced, eye-catching maps and ingenious and informative diagrams. Added to this there are numerous well-chosen photographs which really enhance the text rather than merely appearing as decorative edges to the page.

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Peter Parker

## RESOURCES

An element of retrenchment, of drawing in of horns, is apparent in museum holiday activities over the Christmas holidays. The reasons are chiefly twofold: lack of resources and lack of support. Under-staffed and under-financed departments are most likely to cut back in this period when they have to compete with new toys, short days and rotten weather. The moral is that if you want your museum to go on entertaining you in the winter holidays, you'd better go along and join in now.

Learnt societies are wont to unbind towards young people at the festive season and produce their most amusing professor, supported by slides, experiments, even huns and orange squash. These lectures can be very useful to youngsters considering their careers, for example the Royal College of Surgeons puts on "The Sixth-Form and Medicine" every year. Unfortunately, there are a few scheduled for after Christmas.

Activities in the halls of culture cover a wide range, but two frequent themes are Christmas past and Christmas abroad. Most museums and galleries will be closed on December 24-26 and January 1. Events are free unless a price is given.

The National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London WC2, has prepared a quiz sheet "Christmas Past, Christmas Present", at three levels, infant, junior and senior, which will be available between December 22 and January 6. It lies in with an adult leaflet on Nativity paintings for the benefit of family visits, and leads to the only painted Christmas puds in the gallery. The gallery has also opened its first exhibition designed for children, which explains the symbolism of a single work, the "Adoration of the Kings" by Jan Gossaert.

Lecture demonstrations for 10 to 16-year-olds will explain some of the techniques used by the Old Masters: "Golden Oldies" – early Italian altarpieces (January 2), "Cho to Work With an Eye" – tempera painting (January 3), "What's Behind It All?" – the reverse side of paintings (January 4), and "Striking Oil" – demonstration of oil painting (January 5). These will all start at 3.15pm with queue tickets issued at 2.30.

The National Portrait Gallery round the corner has produced a quiz worksheet for children over eight based on the Tudor portraits. You can judge a fancy beard competition and find the present that doesn't fit. The Tate Gallery, Millbank, SW1, offers children's tours on December 27 and 28, and January 3, 4, 10 and 11, all starting at the Christmas tree at 11.30.

The British Museum, Great Russell Street, London WC1, has produced a trail to add to the existing series on Egypt, India, China, Greece and Roman Britain. This is a dragon trail based on the special exhibition on Chinese ornament, "The Lotus and the Dragon".

The Museum of London, London Wall, EC2, bases a fortnight of fun on the Toys and Games exhibition featuring toys and games of the last 200 years from the museum's collection. The varied programme runs from December 29 to January 13, except for public holidays and Mondays, and includes several workshops on jigsaw puzzles, cut-out toys, model theatres, soldiers and much more. On January 10 there is a visit to Thorp's, model makers, for which tickets must be obtained in advance. For those and more details about the holiday activities, ring the Press Office (01-600 3699 ext 240780).

The Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, Cambridge Heath Road, London E2, is naturally also strong on toys and games, but its holiday programme is inspired by its exhibition, "Spirit of Christmas with the Nutcracker Prince", which continues until January 20. On December 27 and January 2 you can make a rat or mouse mask and learn to dance in it; on December 31 there is a workshop on German Christmas traditions, with songs, games and on January 3, the Wig Baller explains their skills. On December 29 there is a non-dancing Punch concert at 1.15 on December 21, and on January 2, "The World of the Magic" will reveal the delights of the



## MERRY GO-ROUND

Judith Mirzoeff on the round of exhibitions, activities, films and lectures for the Christmas holiday

Victorian invention to all the family on December 27-29 and 31, and January 2 and 3 at 3.00pm. Free tickets will be required and can be obtained from the Education Service. On all weekdays that the museum is open, "Test Bed", a selection of hands-on experiments, can be tried between 11.30 and 4.30pm. Finally, members of the Radio Society will give an introduction to amateur radio at 2.30pm on January 4 and 5.

The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7, is showing a new film, *The World of Dinosaurs*, at 7.00pm on January 2. A talk on the museum's collection, "Dinosaur Den", a Christmas shop and a dinosaur model are also on offer. There are no special activities, but a new permanent exhibition of whales and their relatives has just opened.

The Museum of Mankind, Burlington Gardens, London W1, is popular with children and convenient to combine with shopping trips. It provides a selection of worksheets to go with its changing exhibitions of other societies and cultures.

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Chamberlain Square, will present appropriate Christmas music, a carol concert at 1.15 on December 21, and a band of brass at 1.00pm on December 22 and 23.

The National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, will be showing video programmes on natural history subjects twice daily at 11.00am and 2.00pm. Its activity sheets have been augmented by one relating to its new exhibit on whales.

The Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, is showing a mixed selection of films on December 27, 28 and 31 and January 4 at 11.00am and 2.00pm. An art competition with anything in the museum as a subject will be held on December 27-31. Haggis Castle Museum, Glasgow, draws on its "Alice in Wonderland" exhibition for a quiz and games for children, and the Glasgow Art Gallery and Museum is organizing a programme of films on January 3-5.

Manchester City Art Gallery, Mosely Street, is putting on an exhibition, "A Child's Christmas" reverting to the Christmas past theme, until January 5. There is a related competition, with art materials as prizes. The Merseyside County Museum plans to arrange quizzes and show films on an occasional basis, and Newcastle Museum of Science and Industry will display Christmas cards designed by school children for a competition. The winner has been printed from a book made up by

a local television station, using an old press in the museum. An exhibition of scientific toys is also planned.

As well as the usual Christmas plays and pantos, some theatres put on free shows in their foyers.

The National Theatre, South Bank, London SE1, has some ticket events based on various forms of storytelling, but these sell out early. In the foyer of the Olivier Theatre there will be a Punch and Judy show at 4.00pm and 6.00pm on December 27; different puppets on December 22 and 31 and January 4. *Rosy the Clown* on December 29 and January 5, and a wire-walking circus act on January 3, all at 5.30pm.

The Barbican Centre, London EC2, has a "New Year's Teddy Bear Concert" on January 2 at 5.00pm (only £3.80 if accompanied by a teddy bear). As well as suitable music there will be personal and film appearances by distinguished bears. In the foyer until January 5 are recitations of designs by E. J. Taylor for Christmas displays in Tiffany's windows, on the theme of St Nicholas and the elves.

At the Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London W8, the Zuriya performers will sing songs and tell stories from Africa and the Caribbean, from January 2-8 at 2.30 and 3.45pm.

The National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London SE8, has a film programme which is free, but children will first have to pay 50p entrance to the museum, or 75p for a combined ticket which also admits them to the Old Royal Observatory, and they must be accompanied by an adult. The films are *Murder Aboard* with Margaret Rutherford on December 27 and 28; *To the Ends of the Earth*, the story of Sir Ranulph Fiennes's transglobe expedition on January 2 and 4; and *Shamrock, Last of the Line*, about a restored Cornish barge on January 3, all at 2.30pm. At the planetarium in the old Observatory there will be programmes on December 27 and 28. At 2.30 "A Voyage to Halley's Comet" and at 3.30 "Some Interesting Stars" will cost adults 30p and children 15p, plus the entrance fee.

The Jodrell Bank Planetarium, Macclesfield, is repeating "The Star of Bethlehem" on December 27-30 and January 2-6 at 2.30pm. Tickets are £2, or £1 for children and senior citizens, and the Visitor Centre will also be open from 2.00-5.00pm.

The Royal Institution, 21 Albemarle Street, London W1, can claim to have originated the Christmas lecture business, now in its 155th course. In "The Message of the Gospels" Dr Walter Bodmer FRSE explains how much we know about the information contained in the Gospels. The lectures are on December 20, 22, 28 and 31 and January 2 and 4, all at 8.00pm. Course tickets are £4 for children aged 10-17, and they will pay £1 for single tickets available on the day only. If you miss the lectures and the BBC television broadcasts, it is now possible to buy the video recording.

The Horniman Museum, Forest Hill, traditionally opens its lecture hall on Boxing Day at 2.00pm for the Director's lecture. This year David Boston will talk about Man, Plains and Prairies, with a variety of illustrations. The Royal College of Surgeons, 35/43 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3PN, will tell the Medical Story of Man in Space at 3.00pm on January 4, followed by refreshments. Send an s.a.e. to Miss Mapp of the Surgical Training Office to obtain tickets.

The Royal Institute of British Architects, 66 Portland Place, London W1, is organizing two study days for young designers. "Makespace" for 8 to 13-year-olds on January 5 will use building elements to make spaces for working, eating etc. The "Architecture Workshop" for 14 to 17-year-olds will be held at the Five Dials Gallery in Covent Garden, and a mapped trail around the area will be followed by a project to design a building for the Jubilee market site. Both sessions are from 9.30-2.30, cost £1.50 and must be booked in advance through Shena Parsons at the RIBA (01-580 5533) which will be closed from December 21 until January 2.

The Royal Society of Arts, 8 John Adam Street, London WC2, has invited the librarian of HM Customs and Excise to talk on "Smugglers Yesterday and Today" on January 2 at 2.30pm. Children over 12 who would like to go should write to the Assistant Secretary (Lectures).



Sir Cedric. By Roy Gerrard. Colman £4.95

Sir Cedric is the third and perhaps the best to date of Roy Gerrard's entertaining, highly individual picture-book stories set in Olde (or fairly Olde) England: this time the Medieval. As before, it combines a charmingly dotted plot and cast with meticulous visual detail and some quite stunning near Pre-Raphaelite design. The undemanding ballad text in more or less anapestic verse (not unlike that of Stanley Holloway's "Albert and the Lion") amply reflects the brisk uncomplacent character of the tale.

Good Sir Cedric, short, plump, balding on top, with nice kind eyes, is the best of knights, never rude to his subjects ("nor mean when their taxes were due. Nor did he go kissing their daughters as some wicked knights used

to do.") Setting forth to seek for adventure, he finds it by rescuing Fat Matilda (also known as Matilda the Pure) from the villainous Black Ned, who has lodged her in a neat castle which she practically fills. ("Matilda, though fat, was a princess, you see and could have any man that she chose.") A joust, a courtship, a battle (Sir C. is no slouch when acting is required) a wedding feast – we have it all. Of course, this joyfully clean and tidy fantasy, gales but no gore, should be firmly kept from anyone learning history – in spite of the careful costume and armour, the forest of silver birches, and the medieval daisies richly bordering the rustic lanes, where seage and drovers, pigs and vineyard, fat fiddlers and fish (all characters are made to look like roly poly toys) pursue their leisurely way.

Naomi Lewis

## CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

Children love novelty. They also love repetition and sameness. Between these two, the surprise and the refrain, the best children's books are balanced. Those that tip too far towards novelty bewilder; those that stick to cosy formulae bore. Peter Curry is a man who has found a format and sticks to it. The *Good-night Book* (World's Work £3.95) intersperses a missing which with the personnel (baby, King, conjuror etc) so coyly saluted in Mr Curry's atrocious rhymes. If you can manage to keep reading it, children will love it, easily identifiable diagrammatic pictures with thick black lining, a simple theme and a simple joke.

Likewise the egregious *Pip*, in *Pip's Bed and Here's Pip* (Hodder and Stoughton 95p each) who appears little by little, from button nose to wriggly toes, will amuse your ohhge. If you can fight off the yawns yourself, it's no accident that so many children's books end with sleep. But, oh! for more of the wild beauty of Nicola Bayley's imagination. *Copacetic* (Walker Books £1.95 each) are exquisite little fantasies of cats who dream of being, respectively, Spider Cat, Crab Cat, Polar Bear Cat, Parrot Cat and Elephant Cat. The miniature lushness which spills out from each page is as captivating to the adult as to the child, and the touches of humour (the cat sewing herself elephant ears) will have a visual appeal to both.

If Ms Bayley has a fault it is that she is too lush, vivid, and glowing. When we turn to the Peter Piper series, where Elaine Moss and Celia Berridge, we can see how much this is a fault in the right direction. These are absolutely worthy readers- cum-spot-the-ball ring-bound fold-outs which are dull as ditchwater. As the non-serious, multicultural playground visit the Wild-Life Park, go in the Garden, frolic At the

Fair and have a Birthday Party (Andre Deutsch £1.95 each) it is painfully clear that correctness of reading strategem, appropriate attitude and immediacy of subject matter are no substitute for imaginative drawing and words with some life in them. Similarly Dick Bruna has produced more safe little fables for early readers with *I Can Make Music*, *The Little Boat and Miffy at School* (all Methuen £1.50 each). No one could object to anything in these books.

Elizabeth Wood's drawings are beautiful and lifelike and there is a deal of fun to be had out of her *Animal Riddles* series from Walker Books (£1.25 each). The concertina format has been chosen, however, is confusing, and as we follow *The Frog Jumps*, *The Puppy Races*, *The Rabbit Runs*, *The Cat Walks*, *The Duck Waddles* and *The Pig Trots* along the folds and over the back to arrive home again the pleasure gained is more likely to be that of recognising old friends like snails and ladybirds along the way than that of following a story. Ron and Atle van der Meer's *Surprise Concertina* books (Blackie £1.50 each) are also a bit bewildering. Where's the apple? has us hunting an apple in the life-the-flap mouths of pig, squirrel, dog etc. What colour? has a manic squirrel apparently intent on painting everything yellow behind its flap. Who's real? alternates toy and real animals in front and behind the flaps (but I really couldn't tell which was meant to be the real lion) and What shape? is more sophisticated in concept, than the others. The back of each concertina has pictures vaguely illustrative of the shapes on the front.

After so much worthiness the cheerful vulgarity of *The Little Engine that Could* (Collins £2.95) is more than welcome. Not only is it a pop-up but also a chug-a-lug book. Never mind if the story, retold by Watly Piper from an original by Mabel C. Bragg is winsome in the extreme. It is a moral tale about kindness overcoming difficulty and it is very satisfying to make the train go chug-a-lug.

Victoria Neumark



## Maths for parents

Mathematics for the Parents of Young Children  
Nine videotapes, each costing £29.99  
+ VAT; complete set £250 + VAT  
Handbook written by Ernest Chouat £3  
National Audio Visual Aids Library,  
Paxton Place, Gipsy Road, London  
SE27 9SR.

The rationale behind the production of this series of nine videotapes is both interesting and unusual. The tapes are intended to help teachers explain to parents the relevance of mathematics in young children's education. They even show how parents can come into the classroom to help and suggest that some school might like to set up a parents' maths group to come in and assist with project work.

Each of the 30-minute tapes deals with a particular mathematical topic such as order, sorting, position, and number. Most of them consist of edited scenes of young children working in school. In addition, there are interviews with the teachers and with parents to explain what is going on.

The age range dealt with is early infant, so much of the content is relevant for pre-school education. We see lots of practical play activities, and the programmes try to explain that within them lurks a rich variety of mathematical learning. What to the untrained eye is mere sloshing around of paint is in fact an early stage in the development of the notion of "order".

Teachers and play group leaders must be familiar with eager parents who are keen to see their children start learning their tables at the age of six. These programmes are good at presenting the argument that much is to be learnt from structured practical activities. Dr Chouat is a recognized expert in this field and he plays his part well.

I showed the tapes to a group of 18 local primary teachers following an in-service mathematics course. None of them would buy the tapes. The simplest problem is cost. The schools could not afford £250. If the PTA tried to buy them, then the cost with VAT and postage is even higher. And since the scope of the tapes is restricted to first-year infant work, their acquisition is something of a luxury.

Also the programmes are rather repetitive. We see a line of children marching through the playground as part of the "order" programme. The same march is featured in another programme to illustrate "direction". It is nice to see how different mathematical concepts crop up in the same activity, but seeing the same kind of scene over and over again can become wearing.

The series hopes to show the relevance of the infant activities in later school life, but the only scenes of older children show a junior class making a frieze. Not much time is given to this and the same frieze pops up in each programme.

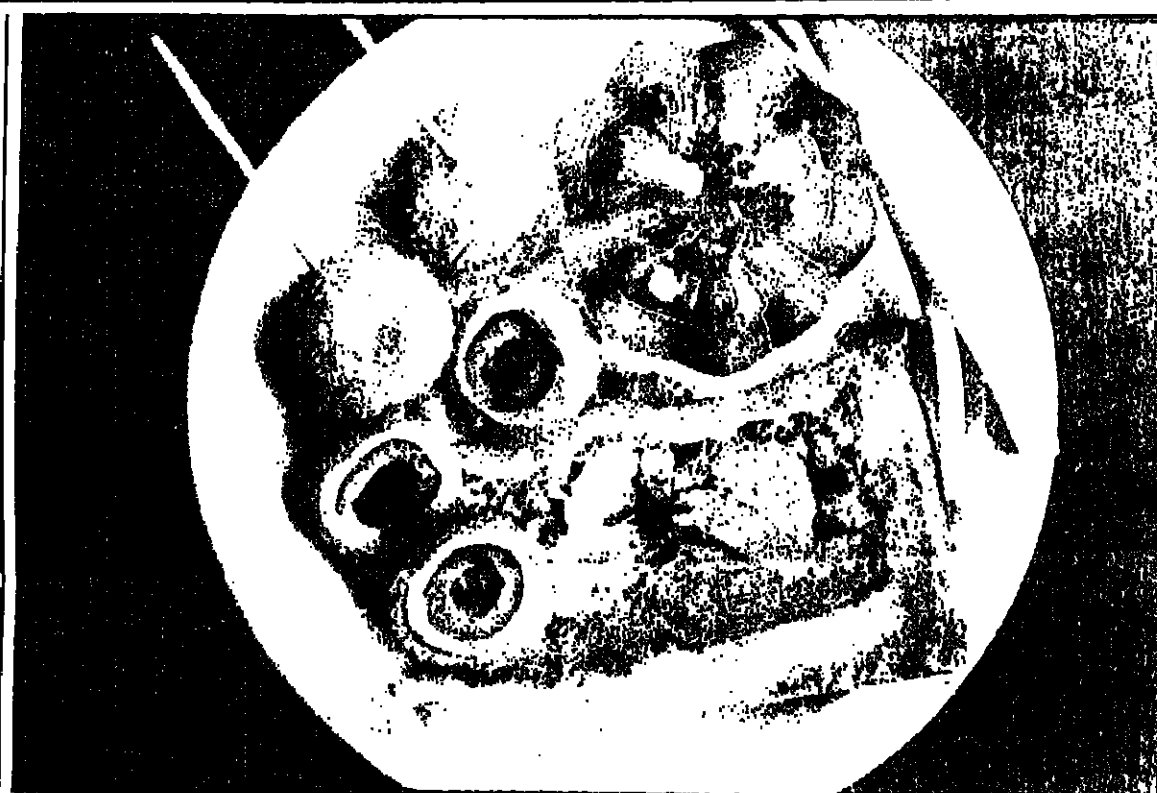
The series is an excellent idea but it is too narrow. The programmes could have covered a wider age range, said the teachers, who watched them. Certainly teachers would like to have video material to explain to parents some of the things going on in school. Where an I.C.A. has separate infant schools there would probably be more commitment among staff to purchasing infant level material such as this, but on the whole it will be of most value to playground leaders to show to their parents. In the context of a school play group the tapes and the helpful booklet would provide good support.

Andrew Rothery

## Edits

**EASTER SCHOOL**  
The 1985 BFI Easter School will be held at the NUT's education centre at Stoke Rochford Hall, Lincs from March 30-April 3. Teachers new to media education will have the chance to try out teaching materials and undertake practical video work. Details from Julie Maher, BFI Education, (tel: 01-437 4355).

## RESOURCES/VIDEO



## More puff than pastry

Margaret Japson tries out a new collection of programmes for the home economics classroom

**Basic Foods Cookery Demonstrations**  
By New Generation Home Economics  
VHS or Betamax  
Price: £8 a month to hire or £23 to buy  
Trotman and Co, 12-14 Hill Rise,  
Richmond, Surrey TW10 6UA.

This video is a collection of six 15-minute programmes, each of which has been sponsored by a particular manufacturer or company: the Sea Fish Authority, Butter Information Council, Allison National Dairy Council, Silver Spoon Sugar and the Milk Marketing Board. This approach is familiar to those home economics teachers who subscribe to the New Generation Home Economics service but it appears to be less successful in video form. There is no attempt by the sponsors to do anything other than present their product in the best possible light, an understandable bias perhaps, but regrettable since an educational video on basic foods should offer more than mere promotional material.

Each module is said to give "essential details on nutritional value" but there is no reference to, or consideration of, the healthy varied diet as outlined in the NACNE report. Home economics teachers who are adapting their teaching to conform to the dietary

guidelines recommended by the report would find the modules on butter and cheese difficult to use. The need to reduce saturated fats in the UK diet does not preclude the use of butter, but the recipes for shortbread and sandwich fillings would have been more acceptable if there had not been undue emphasis on the use of butter to garnish vegetables.

Similarly, the National Dairy Council demonstrates the versatility of cheese but made no reference to fat content, concentrating the nutritional information on the calcium content of cheese. There is incidentally a mistake on the recipe given for Wensleydale Apple Puff in the conversion of metric measures (75g is not 12oz, even in Wensleydale).

This less than realistic approach is also seen in the cookery demonstrations. With the notable exception of the module produced by the Milk Marketing Board, dishes are demonstrated in isolation, without reference to their use in the diet of a particular individual or family, to the nutritional information or often any other information given about the food in the module. This separation of cookery techniques does not reflect modern classroom teaching in home economics. Pupils of home economics are encouraged to acquire a range of skills,

only one of which is manual dexterity.

The module on sugar concentrates on one aspect, the role of sugar in preservation, and would, therefore, be a useful introduction to a topic which is on most examination syllabuses but which is difficult to cover adequately within the limited time allocation given to home economics lessons today.

It is difficult to gauge the level at which the cookery demonstrations would be most useful. The skills demonstrated are basic although the dishes are not always suitable for beginners and yet information given during the demonstrations is often too vague to be useful to examination classes. The role of cookery demonstrations on the tape is limited in the classroom since there can be no interaction with the pupils, no real appreciation of texture, smell or taste. Also many children, if not their teachers, are sophisticated video viewers and may feel that the full face camera angle, gives the use of only one almost dated, look.

This video is, therefore, a rather unpalatable mixture with only three or four useful modules. Hardly good value for the new generation of pupils educated as home economists, not just cooks.

## Bohemian rhapsodies

**Music Theatre**  
VHS cassette £34.95.  
Teltale International Ltd, 1 Bensham Lane, Croydon, Surrey CR0 2RU.

For once, here is a programme which seems exactly right as a video cassette. It is neither embalmed television nor one of those "look, we've got a video camera" tapes that seem to be flooding the educational market. Instead, it is a professional and colourful compilation of four fully-staged dramatic productions of popular children's music classics, produced by New Zealand's TVNZ.

Actually, the one weak item is the first. Like the others, *Peter and the Wolf* is performed by actors who mime rather than dance. Although individually good, they are handicapped by an extremely cramped (if attractive) set. The result is rather a lot of running on the spot, some dodgy camera work and a particularly embarrassing final march round and round the same tree.

However, it is all very colourful, the wolf's swallowing of the duck is neatly done and the narration by Peter Reid is unobtrusive. If it is ultimately unsatisfactory, it is because we never see the instruments, and instead of being helped to listen to the often witty score, we are asked to concentrate on



the cavorting of the actors. Michael Wilson tries very hard as Peter, but he is left looking into camera for some comparatively long musical bridges. He also stars in the next item, *Sweeney Todd*, the lad who starts a small business as a barber. Based on a story by Stephen Sondheim, the poem has a nicely musical quality which is effectively realized by the same group of Music Theatre actors. As in the other items, the orchestra is the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Bruce Hogg.

production of *Tubby the Tuba*, each instrument of the orchestra being mimed by an actor. Simply staged against a white backdrop, it is colourful to watch and yet we can also concentrate on the music. Grant Tilly makes a nicely portly tuba and it is very brave of him to wear a pink body stocking, especially one which fits so precisely.

The final item is unalloyed delight: a performance of Saint-Saëns' *Carnival of the Animals*. The 14 movements are interspersed with Ogden Nash's comic, complementary poems, and the action is performed by actors, puppets and cartoons. There is a dancing elephant housewife who dreams she is an entire corps de ballet; two simian pianists; a breed of performer for whom Saint-Saëns had little regard; a pair of cuckoos who leave an egg in someone's double bed ("cuckoos lead bohemian lives, they fall as husbands and as wives"); and finally the Pavlovian one. "The swan can swim while sitting down" for pure comedy he takes the crown.

For once this is a video you want to watch again and indeed to keep. It would make a lovely if extravagant Christmas present for any family or school.

David Saff

## Gloom and doom

**The Bio-Bombshell**  
Information Takeover  
Both in the series "Quest: Questions in Engineering Science and Technology"  
VHS or Betamax, £29.95 each  
New Scientist/Quanta.

These films are both, and equally, about a rich future and the end of everything familiar. On the whole, I'd say that it was their message of gloom that got to me. They would be intelligible, more or less, to anyone over the age of about 10, but look to be aimed as fodder for sixth forms.

*Bio-Bombshell* is a thumb-nail sketch of the science of bio-technology. DNA's helical railway lines shunt about the screen, and it all seems intelligible enough. We see how palm oil trees may be cloned, and thus overcome their natural failings. We see how sheep and goats may be made to bear each other's children and share characteristics (a scruffy woolly goat is trotted about as evidence). We see academic entrepreneurs in pretty offices hoping to grow vaccines for killer diseases. We are made to feel cheerful if we fret a bit about where it will end.

The scientist-businessmen are disarming about their tinkering with the fundamentals of life. Taxed with being in the business of producing weird new humans or odd diseases or pruning out undesirable characteristics in unborn babies, they say two things and I believe neither of them. One, they say: we can't do it yet, or perhaps ever; two, controls are being set up. A sceptic would prefer to suggest that it's sheep today and us tomorrow. Science is like that, and politics has never been strong enough to stop it. The trouble is, our science is remorselessly and wonderfully clever whilst our politics is inadequate and patchy.

*Information Takeover* tells about a world of powerful computers and telephone networks, in which, says one man, we should think of all the computers, linked by computerized phones to each other, as one big computing system; it transcends national boundaries and mostly serves the rich rather than the poor world, the currency and commodity speculators more than the peasant harvesting his crops. Duncan Campbell, scourge of controlled society, is wheeled out to talk about centralized computer files. Others come on with a line about individualism flourishing through personal computers.

I think we can probably survive the computers we have or know about, and probably can dredge more of benefit than disbenefit from them. But then the film talks about the next generation of machines, which will "know" things, make inferences and decisions, which I suppose in some odd way will be tantamount to the capacity to exercise "will".

Why should we not contemplate the day when a deft-free man - perhaps one robbed of conscience - walks out of the Bio-Bombshell and is seen by the thinking computer to be worthy of the Information Takeover? Not that anyone has the slightest idea what's up; that's what is scary, as usual.

I think the message of these films is that the future results of scientific work are necessarily unknowable. It is no use imagining that science, except in the short term, is providing answers or solutions to current problems: its deeper power is that it produces new worlds. Man has always been shoving himself into the unknown. These films are an attempt at a guidebook to the spaceship from which the future will leap.

Richard North



## MEDIA

## Child's-eye view

Gillian Macdonald on Channel 4's Christmas films by the Children's Film Unit

*Dark Enemy*, Christmas Eve 6.00pm  
*The Custard Boys*, Christmas Day, noon  
*Captain Stirkick*, December 27, 11.00am  
Channel 4.

On the face of it *The Custard Boys*, *Captain Stirkick* and *Dark Enemy* are the most unlikely feature films for Channel 4 to be showing at Christmas. Why should a channel that is not associated with children's programmes run a mini-season of them now at peak viewing times, and why choose films that most children will never have heard of?

The reason is that they're made by kids, says Paul Madden, the communications editor who is responsible for Channel 4's sponsoring *Captain Stirkick* to the tune of £15,000 and *Dark Enemy* to the tune of £11,000. "It fits in with our general policy of giving open access to the public. We're trying to encourage different models of production and different ways of people working together. These films are an extension of that."

They are in fact an incredible achievement and ought to be watched by anyone interested in seeing what young people can produce. All three are very different, astonishingly so given that they are directed by the on-man, Colin Finbow, and his crew of children.

*The Custard Boys* (1979) was produced by the film unit at Forest School where Finbow used to teach. It is a compelling adaptation of John Rae's

novel about England in 1942 and school boys who discover that war is not a game when they kill one of their own group. Filmed on a school budget of £500, with a soundtrack put together with one microphone, one tape recorder and some skilful editing on Finbow's kitchen table, it is already a much-acclaimed production among critics, but this is the first time it will be seen on television.

*Captain Stirkick* (1982) was shown two years ago. The weakest of the three films, it is the first one to be sponsored by Channel 4 and produced by the Children's Film Unit, a charitable organization which Colin Finbow set up "to introduce children to all stages of film work, from script editing and prop gathering to sound editing and acting." An adaptation of a Victorian stage musical, it is the story of a boy who took to crime when his father was murdered. Although the music is lively and entertaining, with crowd scenes of Bartholomew Fair and children's choruses, it suffers from being a straight adaptation of a stage musical.

*The Dark Enemy*, which was premiered at last month's London Film Festival, is much more intriguing. It is the first script which the children have

written themselves and it is bound to have a more direct appeal to young viewers, perhaps because of that. Based on their own idea of doing something on nuclear radiation, it is a moral fable about the post-nuclear society. "Look at the past," says the Moonchild. "They had many things, but always they wanted more. They always wanted more till the wanting burst in them and they set free the power of their magic." It is a haunting tale, beautifully told.

All three films are produced on what by any professional standards is a shoestring budget, and they are unquestionable achievements given the difficulties of directing a team of children. This means not only that the crew are inexperienced but also that they can be less reliable than professional actors.

Now that the unit is under contract to Channel 4, Finbow and his crew are obliged to meet professional schedules and deadlines. This is no easy task for a team that can only meet at weekends in Finbow's flat. There is no money to produce premises for regular workshops in acting, camera work, lighting and make-up, and filming has to be completed over two weeks in the

school holidays. After that, three months of editing means a process of editorial discussions at weekends and some hard graft by Finbow who does the cutting himself during the week. These difficulties apart, though, the films are criticized for being "middle class boys' films". Colin Finbow readily acknowledges this, but puts it down to the democratic way in which the unit takes decisions. He says they are not the films he wants to make, but what the children want. He claims the girls are different about taking parts, and that it is difficult to find strong material with heroines in the lead. In *Dark Enemy* all the principal characters are boys. The girls wait at home for them, and when in one scene a baby doll is shown to them for the first time, the girls fight to nurse it.

This stereotype is something Channel 4 has discussed with the unit, but any decision to change it is left to the children.

There is obviously a dilemma here between the democratic philosophy on which the unit is run and the weakness it produces in the films. Colin Finbow may argue that there is an innate conservatism in the children, but it must be up to him as director, and

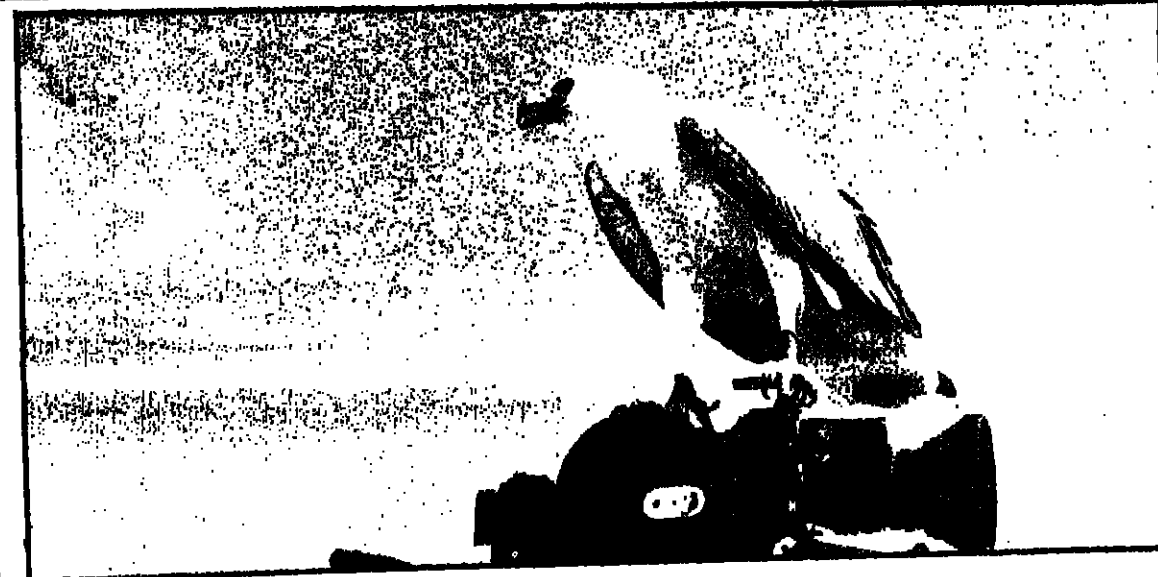
ex-teacher, to guide them towards new approaches and to wheedle more adventurous work out of them.

It is important too that he should cajole them out of their apparent reluctance to write and edit. The scriptwriting they find too much like school essay work and the editing they find boring. Yet these are precisely the areas that most determine the form of the films, and the children should surely be persuaded to accept that.

Paul Madden believes it is hard for the unit to break its traditional mould and to produce more innovative films, although he does see glimmers of hope in *Dark Enemy*. "It's no use saying to film makers go and be innovative. You will never get more from continuity, and the CFU needs more resources - a lack of time and money are not the best things for producing innovation. Those philosophical questions get swallowed up in the practicalities."

In this instance Channel 4 is content to take what they get on the grounds that it's important for the children to learn how the media industry works. How the children's audience will react, on the other hand, remains to be seen. They will make fewer concessions and care less about educational aims. But what is needed is for them to take an interest in the unit and offer their own services as the writers and editors of future films.

Films by the Children's Film Unit are distributed by the ICA, The Mall, London SW1 (tel: 01-930 3647).



## Wordly wise?

This week Channel 4 launches its 'WorldWise' festival of 70 environmental programmes to run over the next five months. Francesca Greenoak looks for the rationale behind it

**WorldWise**  
An environmental festival on Channel 4.

Under the *WorldWise* umbrella there are to be no less than 70 programmes run by Channel 4 from now until May 1985. It is billed as a festival which should mean that there is something to celebrate. Very probably there is, but the package is being presented with no clear anticipation of what it is.

I don't know why Bill Oddie on egg collecting should sit alongside a documentary on African bushmen or a celebration of the English country farmhouse, apart from being generally connected with - in umbrella phraseology - environmental issues. A large proportion of the viewing on any channel deals with just such matters as landscape, food, and the like. It is not an anthology to get the flavour of the world as an entity in itself, I have realised. The 24 items made up of individual programmes and series, for all the underlying character of this show and, I have to confess, failed to grasp its internal logic.

It is not to say that there are not programmes which whet the appetite. Among the new offerings, I shall look for Melvyn Bragg on the warring history of the border country, and a "realist vision" of a volcano (both in April). Earlier on in January there is a documentary about that little-understood part of the world, the Solomon Islands.

where the neolithic inhabitants practised, it seems, a kind of coppice woodcraft, later people developed a whole range of occupations directly related to the nature of the land, and where modern machinery and technique could now change the landscape as finally has happened in, for instance, the Fen country (*Life on the Levels*). There are only two films which acknowledge explicitly at the start that conservation is not a simple business. *Buildings - Who Cares?* is screened on January 14, and during May, *Reclaiming the Earth* examines the environmental crises in Africa and argues the case for a different genre of development which is both more sustainable and would be land.

There is a cluster of pure close-look natural history documentary films due for transmission in May, and I am pleased to see that arthropods are getting some attention. The subjects of the three films: ants, beetles and spiders are unarguably less cuddly and immediately appealing than, say, deer or foxes, but even so they have had a thin time of it on television, especially considering how important they are ecologically.

No one takes a sharper, closer look at such creatures than Oxford Scientific Films who are responsible for this trio of programmes and who have made a well-deserved name for themselves in ingenious micro cinematography. So much so, perhaps, that the thread of the commentary is some-

times lost in alluring physical detail, but notwithstanding, they offer an important glimpse into an area of natural history too much neglected by the media.

In April, the "Eleventh Hour" slot will feature films about the environmental impact of nuclear power and nuclear war under the title *A Nuclear Future?* The question mark is clearly important. The question which looks promising (also billed for April) takes as its subject the agricultural workers, setting the myth against the reality of the lives of present day workers.

This festival also offers the chance to catch features you might have missed or to see them again. Among the repeats are the award-winning *Frantic Earth* series, and the *Ganges Channel* film about the slender snouted Asian crocodile. Richard Mabey's optimistic appraisal of the sustained and productive relationship between people and plants. *Back to the Roots* is also recorded a second showing over April and May.

The Durrell and Durrell six-part love affair with each other and with nature, *The Amateur Naturalist*, is also to be re-screened from the end of January, but to start *WorldWise* there is a special *Amateur Naturalist* of the Year programme which is to be transmitted on December 27. Channel 4 ran a competition for natural history projects carried out by amateurs. The results, summarized in this film, really do give us something to celebrate. Joanna Morley's careful study of bad-

gers' social life, Frances Eady's survey of the natural history of her garden, Martin Wase's staggering results with amphibian breeding in the suburbs and some tremendously painstaking and original work on the woodcock done by Brian Lowde really does give hope for the future.

The final *WorldWise* event at the end of May will consist of a "lelethon" presented by media celebrities which will "raise commitment and effort (also billed for April) takes as its subject the agricultural workers, setting the myth against the reality of the lives of present day workers."

thought that television of this kind by its nature is better at prompting immediate enthusiasm (the impromptu generosity of a cheque) rather than a prolonged commitment to work to be carried out at some later date. However, there will be reports of conservation projects in progress, and it is

possible that even a one-off day in the field could turn apathy into concern. There is something for everyone on *WorldWise* promises Channel 4. It does seem to be a season of considerable variety - perhaps too much so. I have a slight sense of missing that the overall coherence of the plan may have been sacrificed in that attempt to please everyone. There are some obvious high spots but it remains to be seen whether the whole adds up to more than the sum of its parts.

Channel 4 is producing an Activity Pack which includes background material, reports on environmental projects, and suggestions for viewers who are prepared to involve themselves directly. This will be available free from John Nichol, *WorldWise*, Channel 4, 60 Charlotte Street, London W1P 2AT.

## 4 Television Programme Recording

Week commencing 23 December 1984.

Due to Christmas scheduling there will be no programmes available for licenced recording during this week.

Programmes will be available week commencing 6 January 1985.

For More Information Contact  
TV Recording Licence Dept.



**GUILD LEARNING**  
Guild House Peterborough PE2 9PZ  
Telephone (0733) 83122





1895 Mikado: Walter Passmore as Ko-Ko; left: Patience: Alice Barnett as the Lady Jane; above, 1900 Pirates of Penzance: Jones Hewson as the Pirate King. Illustrations from Gilbert & Sullivan: D'Oyly Carte Years - The Official Picture History by Robin Wilson and Frederick Lloyd (Weidenfeld & Nicolson £12.95).

I embarked on my career as a drama teacher reluctantly - there was no great vocational pull. I had undergone a rather inadequate teacher training course at my own drama school, and although I gained my diploma, I did not quite believe that I was a qualified teacher. I have since had considerable experience as a professional actress and have written and mounted my own show. I hoped that I could draw on these experiences rather than depend on the sterile theories which I had been required to swallow as a student teacher.

The drama departments in the two schools where I teach are still at the developmental stage, so when I began I had the feeling of being a pioneer; that I could blame any mistakes I might make on experimentation. After a few weeks of teaching, I came to realize that if I were sincere and committed to my work, there would be no such thing as a mistake. Everything would be a learning experience for my students - and for me. I had to learn to use my ego, not to impress, but to impress things upon people. I had to learn to say "I don't know" to both students and staff, humility being an important ingredient in the getting of wisdom. Some very delicate souls were in my care, apparently hanging on my every word. I was hooked.

One of these schools is a ballet boarding school where the students undergo a formal academic education as well as their dance and theatrical training. They work very hard, as in such places governors have to be placated and suspect that exam results are over-emphasized. The resident drama teacher has been working valiantly over the years to elevate drama above its drawing-room recitation status. She has given me carte

## Let's pretend

As a temporarily resting actress, Chrissy Roberts had no particular desire to teach. The experience was a pleasant surprise

blanche, and rather than feeling that I am treading on her patch, I consider myself to be up there with her at the forefront of her campaign. When I first started work at this school I was charmed by the energy and enthusiasm of the students, whose ages range from 15 to 18. When the honeymoon was over, however, I became amazed at their ignorance of themselves and of life in general. They had a wonderful feeling of the world being their oyster, but that world was about the size of a geography room globe. As drama is about everything, I realized that I had to provide the vital links between subjects which had been taught in isolation. English literature, foreign languages, history and economics are all about people, they are not just O and A level fodder. Biology and physiology are intensely dramatic: an adrenalin rush can make a person a murderer or a hero. A family's fortune can be changed by the timely heart attack of a relative, and we all know what Helen's physical make-up did for Troy! But clarity begins at home, so introspection, observation and self-realization was the order of the day.

I had to tread very carefully to begin with. The

discipline of ballet seems to constrict the mind as well as the body, so I devised a series of games to release the vital juices. "Let's pretend", even to a self-conscious teenager, can be revealing and often very entertaining. Most of the girls enjoyed these games. They worked hard without knowing they were working. There were some sluggards, but they were soon bullied into action by their more lively sisters. I had aimed at creating an atmosphere in which non-participation was the only form of failure. The girls were taking the responsibility for their own classes and I felt proud. When a student, whose previous refrain has been "I can't" jumps up on command and gives an extempore explanation of how she taught yoga to eggs, or induced floorboards to sing grand opera, you know you are winning.

We became very close. I taught them only one morning a week, so it was easy for the students to confide in their waiting nunny, without the fear of an ensuing staffroom post mortem. Having established that I was unshockable, we could discuss anything. Parental conflict was a dead cert and young love a close second. I used these situations in improvisations, quite often casting

a plaintiff in the role of the offender. The results have been fascinating, particularly mother and daughter encounters. I usually disguised the objectives of an exercise and plunged the students right in without prior discussion. Analysis before the event is death to an acting class.

Criticism is always welcome after everyone has had their turn. I invite the girls to speak first. Cliché-spotting became one of their skills, after a discussion we had about television stereotypes, so we betide anyone who dared to caricature. Body language is another area where they have become red-hot detectives. We spent a whole class playing at saying one thing with our mouths and contradicting it with our bodies. They now know the difference between a deliberate physical lie and just plain old-fashioned bad acting.

Text is something which I have avoided on the whole. I have done a little to de-mythify Shakespeare and we have read the odd play as a cosy end of term treat, but I have been loth to confine their creative powers to the spoken word. Physically, they are wonderfully expressive and they have learned to combine this with the use of sound, phrase and dynamism. I have witnessed some exciting theatre being made without the aid of any great bard. There is no real niche in England for non-verbal actors, but maybe this will spur them on to form their own companies in the European tradition or to be creative choreographers.

Whatever they do, I hope they remember that they are artists and are not content just to mousie their way through the world. I wish them luck in all their ventures and I, an aging hippy, thank them for what they have taught me.

## Déjà lu

Trevor Pateman on a new study of human intelligence

Frames of Mind. By Howard Gardner. Heinemann £18.00, 465 02508 0.

Howard Gardner has produced the first in what promises to be a series of books from the Harvard Project on Human Potential. What has he to report? Above all, that everything points to human intelligence being organized vertically, as a number of faculties, rather than horizontally, as a set of abilities. We are not creatures of general intelligence or general problem solving ability, but creatures capable of uneven achievement in several relatively self-contained domains. As a consequence, IQ tests must be held to show a false picture of individual talent. They just do not tap in to the full range of abilities we possess. Gardner identifies these abilities as seven in number, occupied by the linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic and two "personal" intelligences.

So what is the evidence for this picture of the mind? Two criteria set the tone of much of the book. These are the idea that an intelligence will be localized in the brain in such a way that its core properties will be revealed in the effects of localized brain damage or disease, and the idea that *idiot savants*, prodigies and people who show striking development of just one kind of intelligence, provide evidence for the existence and relative autonomy of the different kinds of human potential Gardner identifies.

So far so good. Faculty psychology underpinned by findings of brain researchers like A.R. Luria (*The Man with a Shattered World*) and Michael Gazzaniga and Roger Sperry (right and left hemisphere specialization) makes very good sense of what we know about human potential. And using the extraordinary cases of brain damage and prodigious talent to illuminate the structure of ordinary competences is a sound research strategy: the disabled and the able are, for the scientist, naturally occurring experiments. This explains why, for example, psychologists are currently so interested in the linguistic development of deaf children - though to see their importance, you have to think of the language faculty as independent of the oral-aural channel.

However, though Gardner sets out in the right direction I think his book stumbles badly in its execution. I found it frequently long-winded, evasive and failing to follow through its leading ideas. Surveying rival theories Gardner writes "somewhere between the Chomskian stress on individuals, with their separate unfolding mental faculties, the

Plagietian view of the developing organism passing through a uniform sequence of stages, and the anthropological attention to the formative effects of the cultural environment, it ought to be possible to forge a productive middle ground". Science is not about the middle ground. It's about truth; and Gardner is quite clear that he thinks Piaget is importantly mistaken in treating logic-mathematical intelligence as the general form of all intelligence. How could it be productive to retain what you think false? As for the contest between Chomsky and the anthropologists, Gardner elsewhere writes: "I have taken some pains in this book to avoid pitting genetic against cultural factors". Is that a virtue, if this is an issue which divides the major theorists? In this connection one of the more surprising omissions from the book is the absence of any reference to the 1975 face-to-face debate between Chomsky and Piaget and their respective allies, published as *Language and Learning* (editor M. Plattell-Palmer) in which the controversy between "modular" and "general-purpose" approaches to intelligence is debated at length, in

relation to language at least.

A main feature of the two hundred pages Gardner devotes to exposition of his six intelligences is the extensive use of introspective reports by great artists and scientists on how they create. I'm sure most readers will have a sense of *déjà lu* as they encounter Einstein on Einstein and all the rest yet again. It is surely the performances of extraordinary individuals which are of interest to the student of human potential, not their introspections. And case studies of extraordinary individuals do not have to rely on introspective evidence, as the studies of *Genie* (by Sheila Curtiss) and *Nadia* (by Lynn Sells) show: *Genie* was forcibly isolated by her parents in an attic until adolescence and her post-release development has been intensively studied. *Nadia* showed extraordinary drawing ability though an autistic child. Gardner's concluding discussion of educational implications of his work is, as he acknowledges, undeveloped. It is not much more than an eclectic survey of a number of practical endeavours to realize human potential: the Suzuki method, the Venezuelan national project to develop intelligence, Puluwat navigation apprenticeships, Paulo Freire's pedagogy, a bit on computers (but no serious discussion of, say, Papert's work). If you want 400 pages on current approaches to human potential, Papert's *Mindstorms* and Poldor's *Modularity of Mind* together offer a livelier and deeper entry into current thinking.

## Classified Advertisements

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### Appointments vacant

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